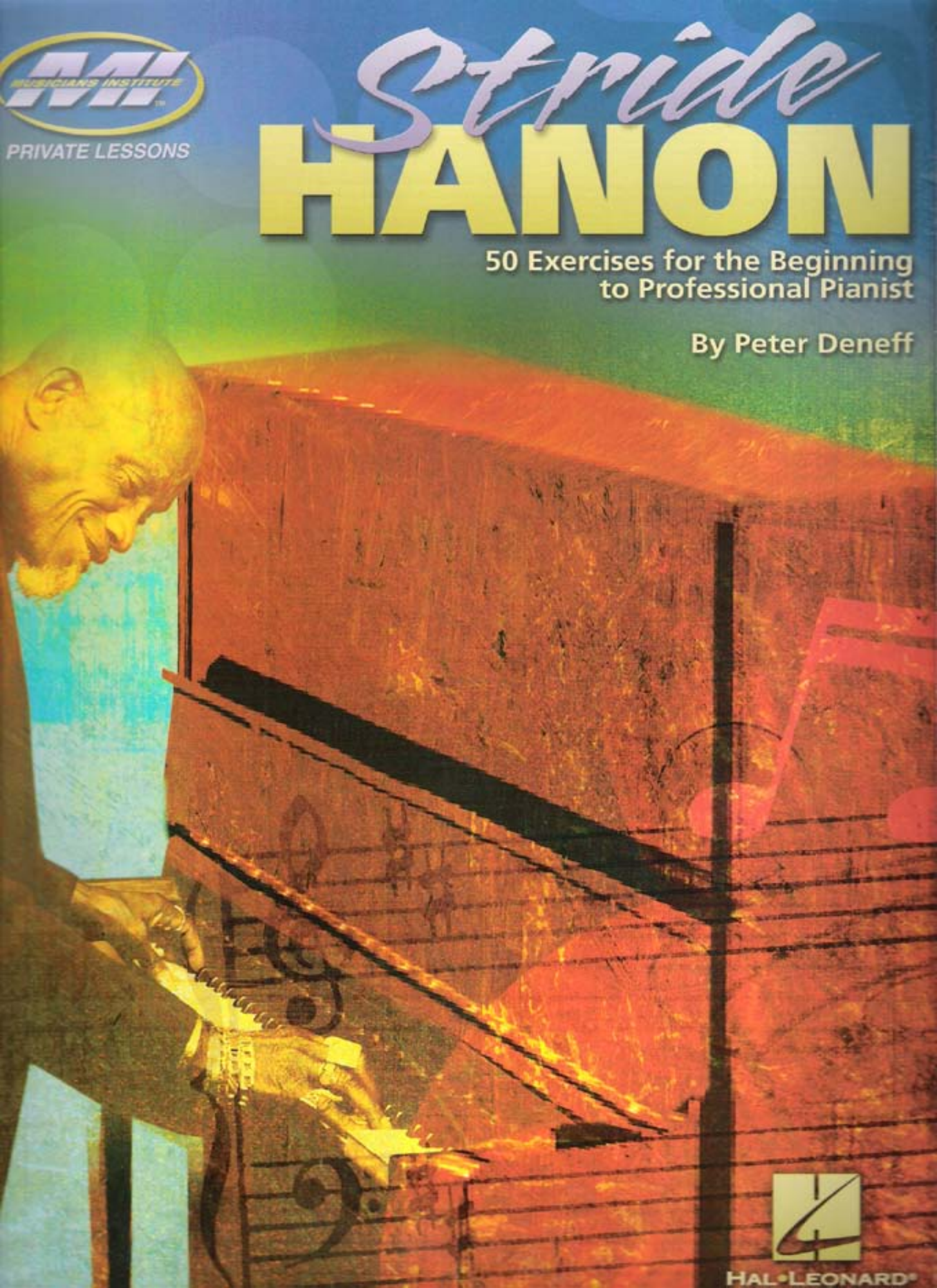
MUSICIANS INSTITUTE

PRIVATE LESSONS

Stride HANON

50 Exercises for the Beginning to Professional Pianist

By Peter Deneff



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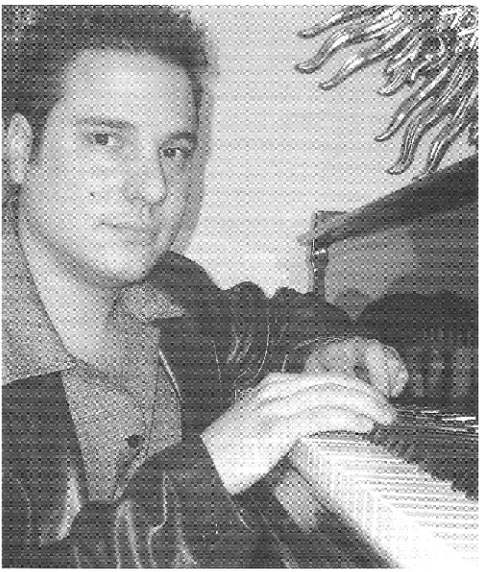

About the author

Peter Deneff grew up in Long Beach, California listening to Greek and classical music and studying classical piano with Leaine Gibson. After starting his professional life playing in a Greek wedding band at age fifteen, he became obsessed with straight-ahead and Latin jazz. He began jazz studies with renowned pianist Mike Garson, where he crafted his art through studying some of the great jazz improvisers such as Charlie Parker, Bud Powell, and Chick Corea. During this time he also studied many ethnic styles that eventually led to the development of his classical and jazz compositional style as well as the formation of his Middle Eastern-Latin jazz group *Excursion (www.excursionjazz.com)*. He also pursued undergraduate and graduate studies in classical composition and film scoring at California State University Long Beach under the direction of Dr. Justus Matthews, Dr. Martin Herman and Perry Lamarca. Peter has written several best-selling books for Hal Leonard Corporation including *Jazz Hanon, Blues Hanon,* and *Salsa Hanon.* He has also composed and performed music for the Charles Sheen film, *Five Aces.* Deneff has performed at such varied venues as the Greek Theater, the Carpenter Performing Arts Center, the Playboy Jazz Festival, the Los Angeles Street Scene, the Orange County Street Fair, Universal Studios, the NAMM show, and the Baked Potato. His stylistic versatility has allowed him to play and/or sing with a diverse assortment of groups like Tierra, Ike Willis (singer with Frank Zappa), the Leslie Paula/Universal Studios Salsa Band, and Ebi, a notable Persian singer. Deneff also continues to play modern and folk Greek music for numerous events *(www.synthesimusic.com)* as well as an occasional Middle Eastern or jazz gig. Besides performing, Peter has also taught in many institutions such as Musician's Institute, Orange County High School of the Arts, and Cypress College, where he continues to teach classical and jazz piano. He spends most of his time in his studio producing projects for Yamaha Corporation *(Disklavier, Clavinova, Internet Direct Content)* and Hal Leonard Corporation *(PVG Play-Alongs, MI Press-Hanon Series).*

Introduction

When one speaks of early jazz or American popular music, the subject of stride piano playing must invariably be mentioned. It is heard in its various incarnations in the ragtime music of Scott Joplin, the raucous stylings of Willie "The Lion" Smith, the bluesy and relaxed interpretations of Count Basie, the progressive and often dissonant sound of Thelonious Monk, as well as the syncopated and Latinized pyrotechnics of Michel Camilo. One can even watch an old Marx Brothers movie and find Chico Marx plunking away at a popular standard of his day, his left hand maintaining the steady stride rhythm while his right performs physical comedic feats. The ostinato two-beat feel of stride can also be found in the world of 19th and 20th century classical piano music. While perhaps it "*ain't got that swing*," it certainly *does* mean a thing! In fact, while the rhythmic origins of swing music are undoubtedly rooted in Africa, the actual *bass-chord-bass-chord* technique of stride piano can be heard in the compositions of Romantic era pianists like Chopin and Liszt.

Perhaps the popularity of stride piano stems from the fact that the piano can provide a complete and self-contained accompaniment for itself or an ensemble. While jazz piano style is less bass-heavy and more reliant upon the bass player, the stride pianist often performs the function of the bass player as well as the accompanist and soloist. Because of the demanding nature of the left hand function in stride, there are significant physical challenges that must be overcome. This is where the exercises in this book offer their greatest value. These short studies were composed with the left hand in mind. When playing through them, the student will realize that this is a book that was primarily written to strengthen the left hand. This is not to say that the right hand will not be challenged by any means. On the contrary, the right hand parts are designed to create linear, contrapuntal, or syncopated melodic lines on top of the steadily chugging left hand.

As always, when practicing these exercises, there are a few pointers that should be kept in mind:

- Back should be straight with shoulders relaxed.
- Hands should be low profile with fingers curved.
- Always practice with a metronome.
- Tempo should be as fast as exercise can be performed accurately.
- Playing should be clean and even.
- Don't forget to breathe!

If one practices these studies with consistency, the physical demands of stride, ragtime, and even some classical repertoire will be more easily overcome. Of course, as in all disciplines, the student must enjoy the process as well as the results in order to be successful. So relax and enjoy practicing, learning, and attaining new levels of proficiency as you navigate through your lifelong journey of musical development.

Happy playing!
Peter Deneff

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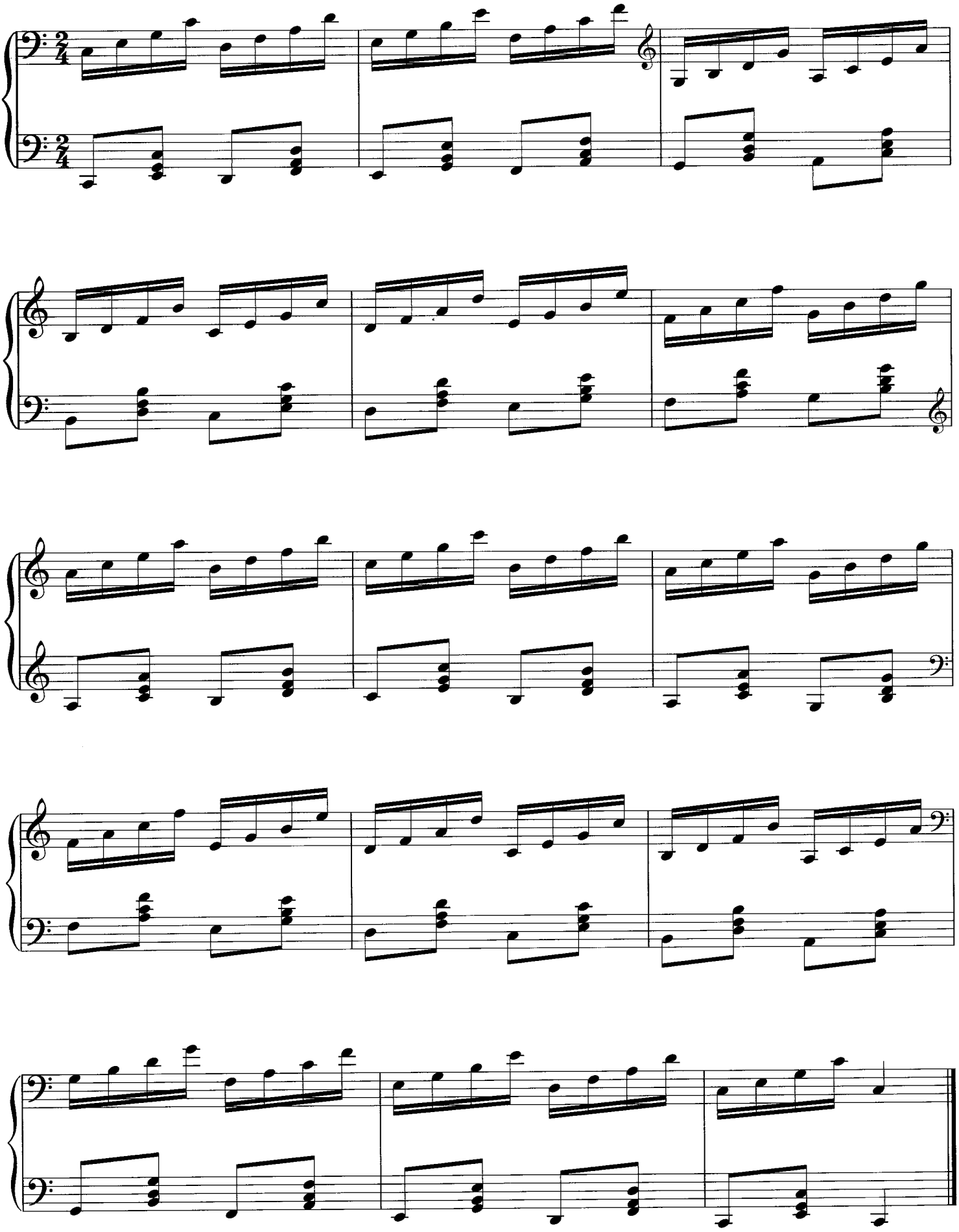

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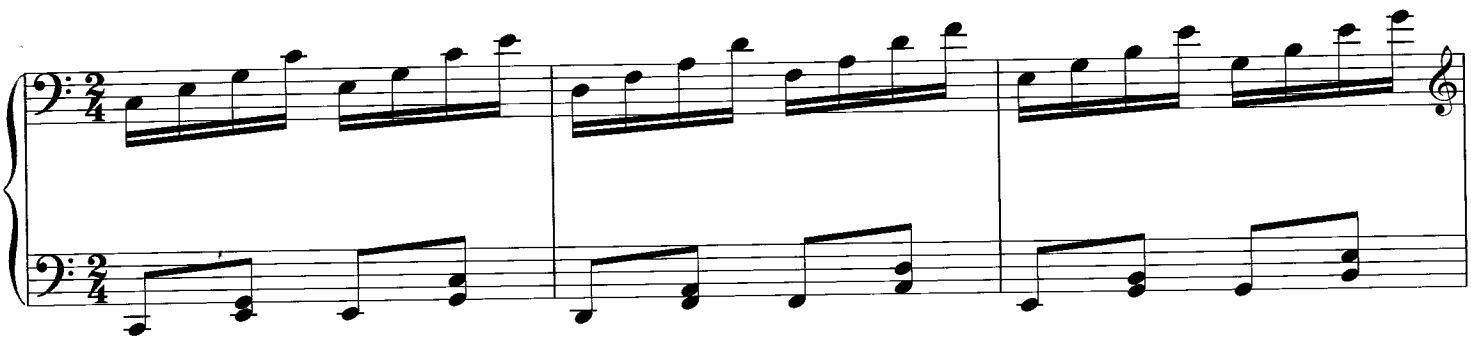

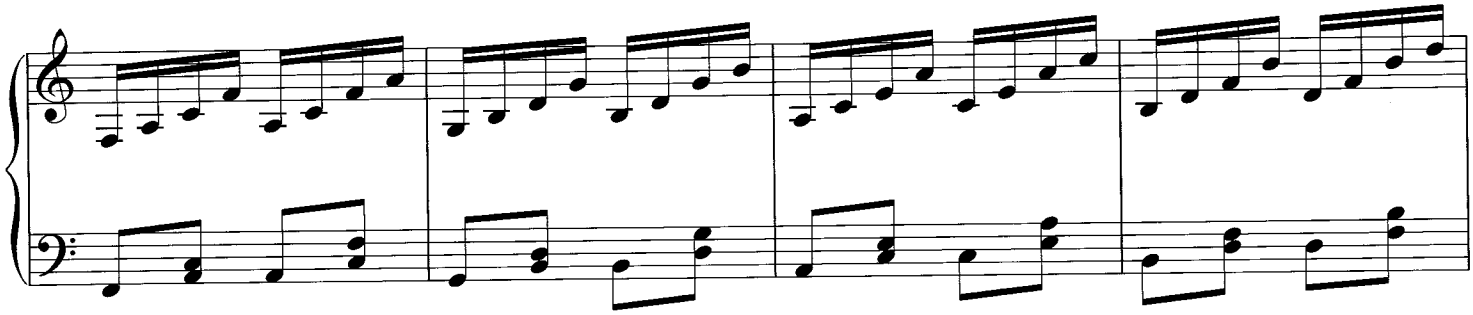

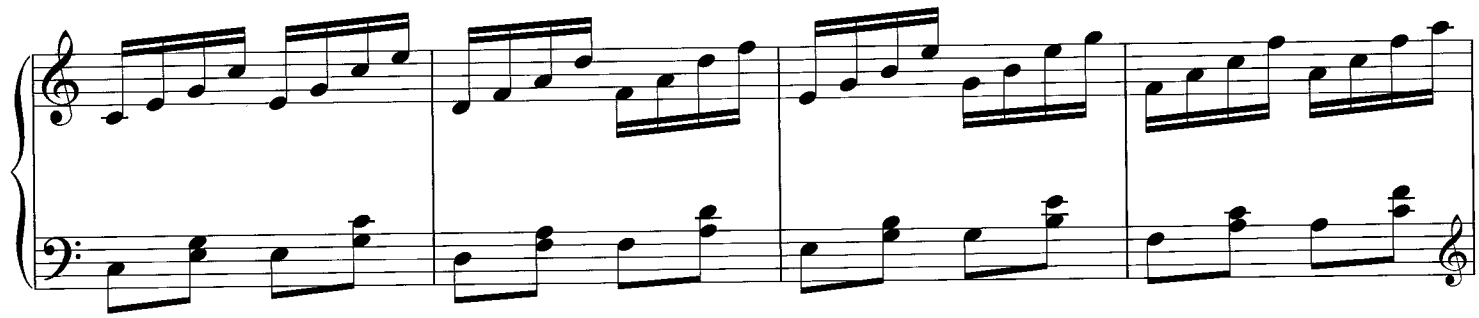

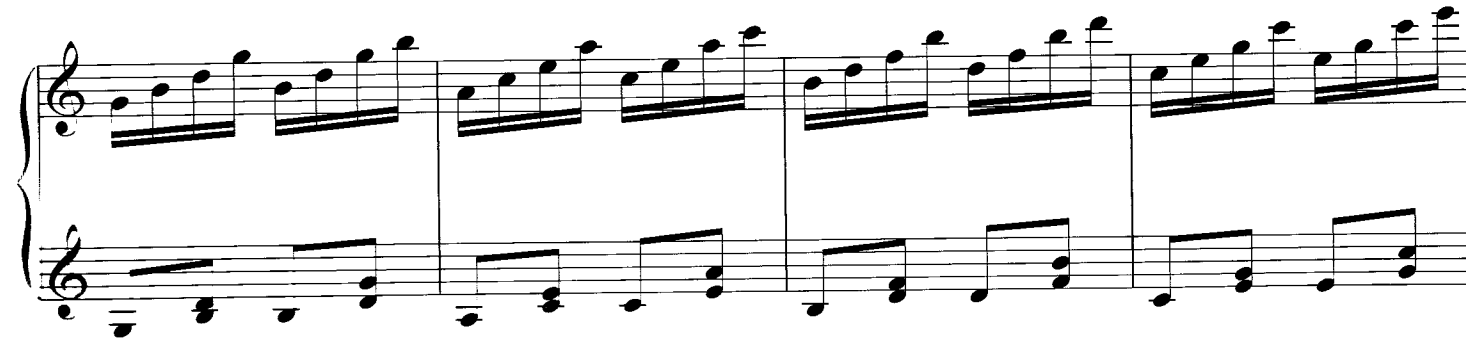

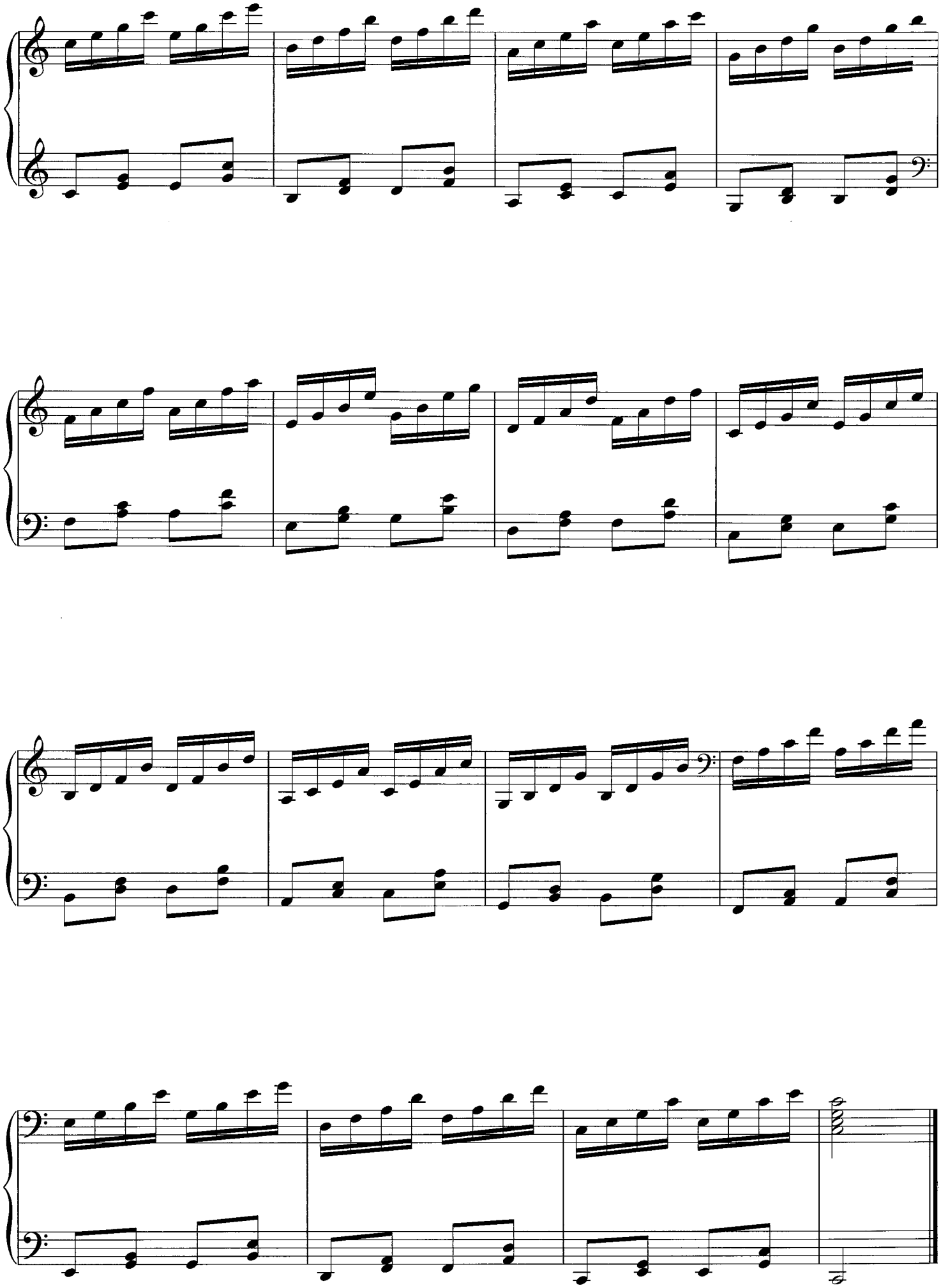

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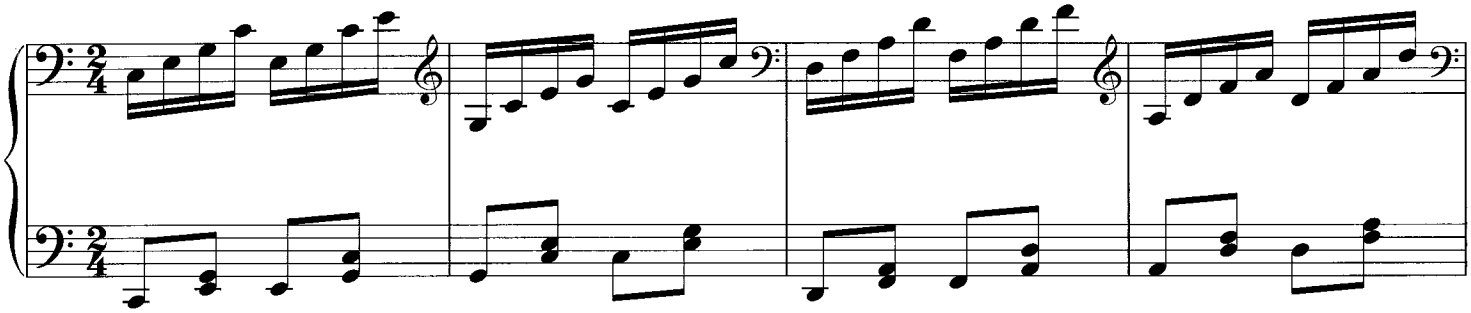

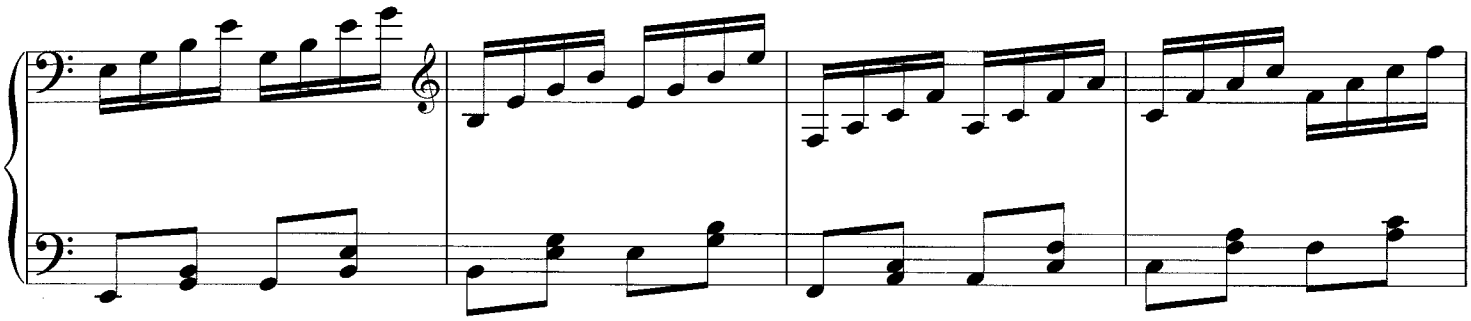

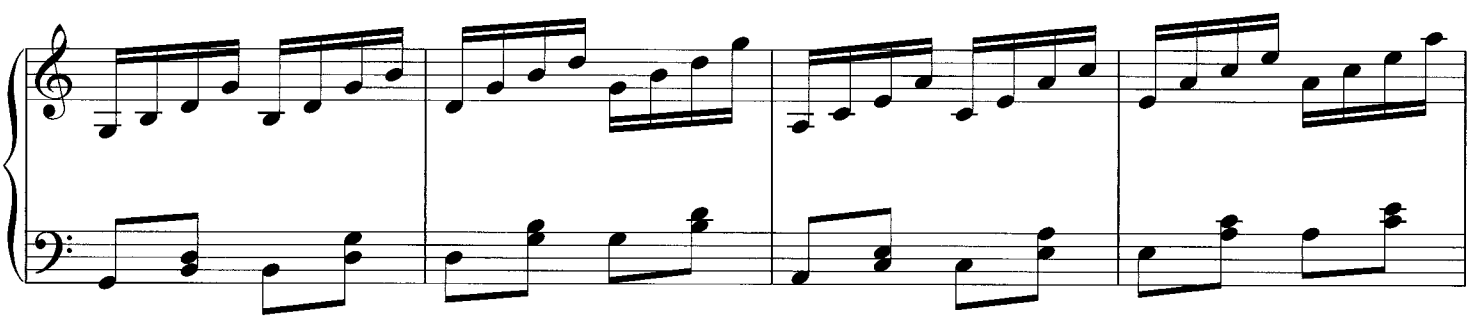

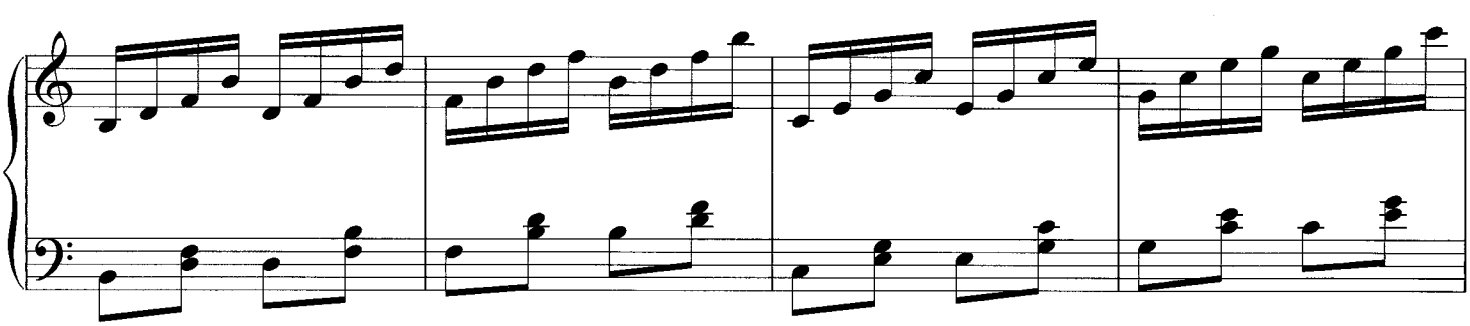

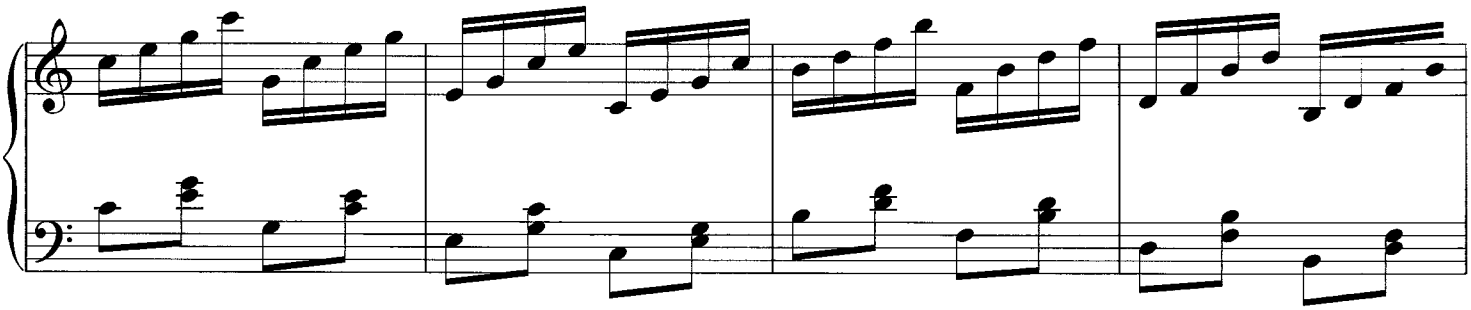

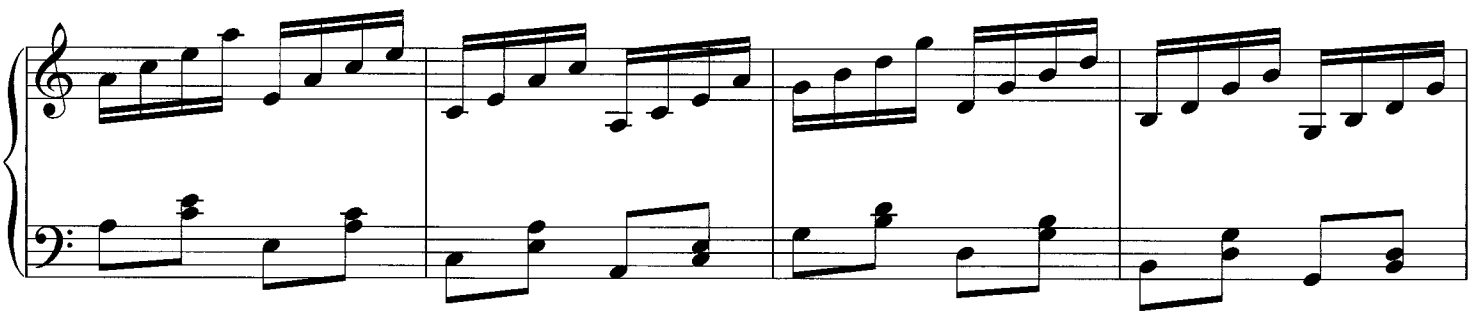

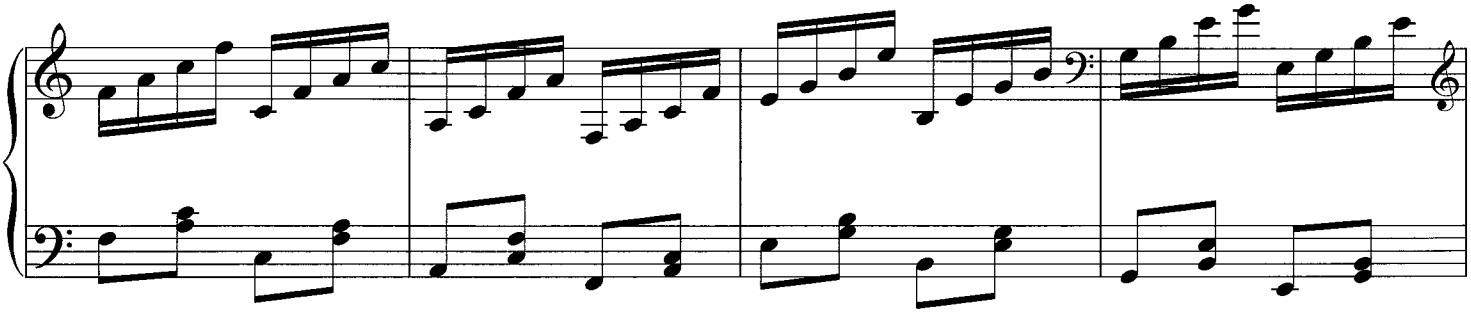

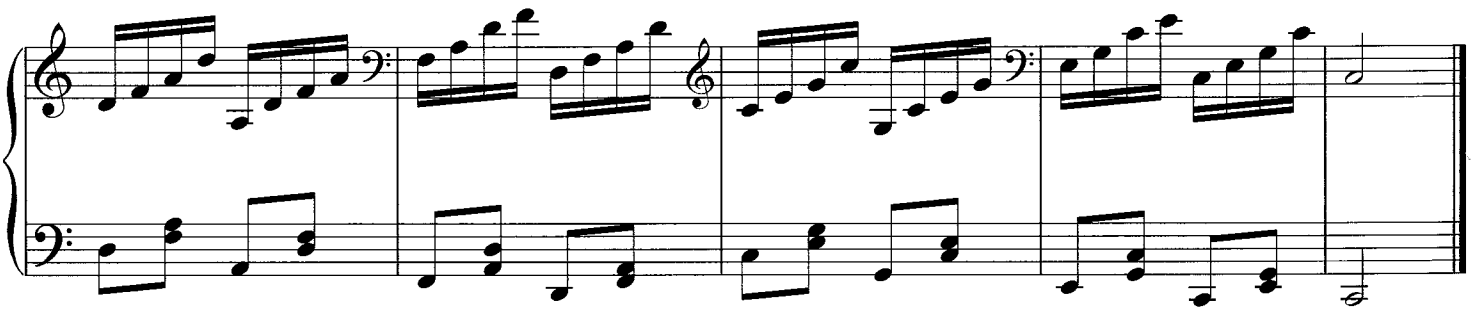

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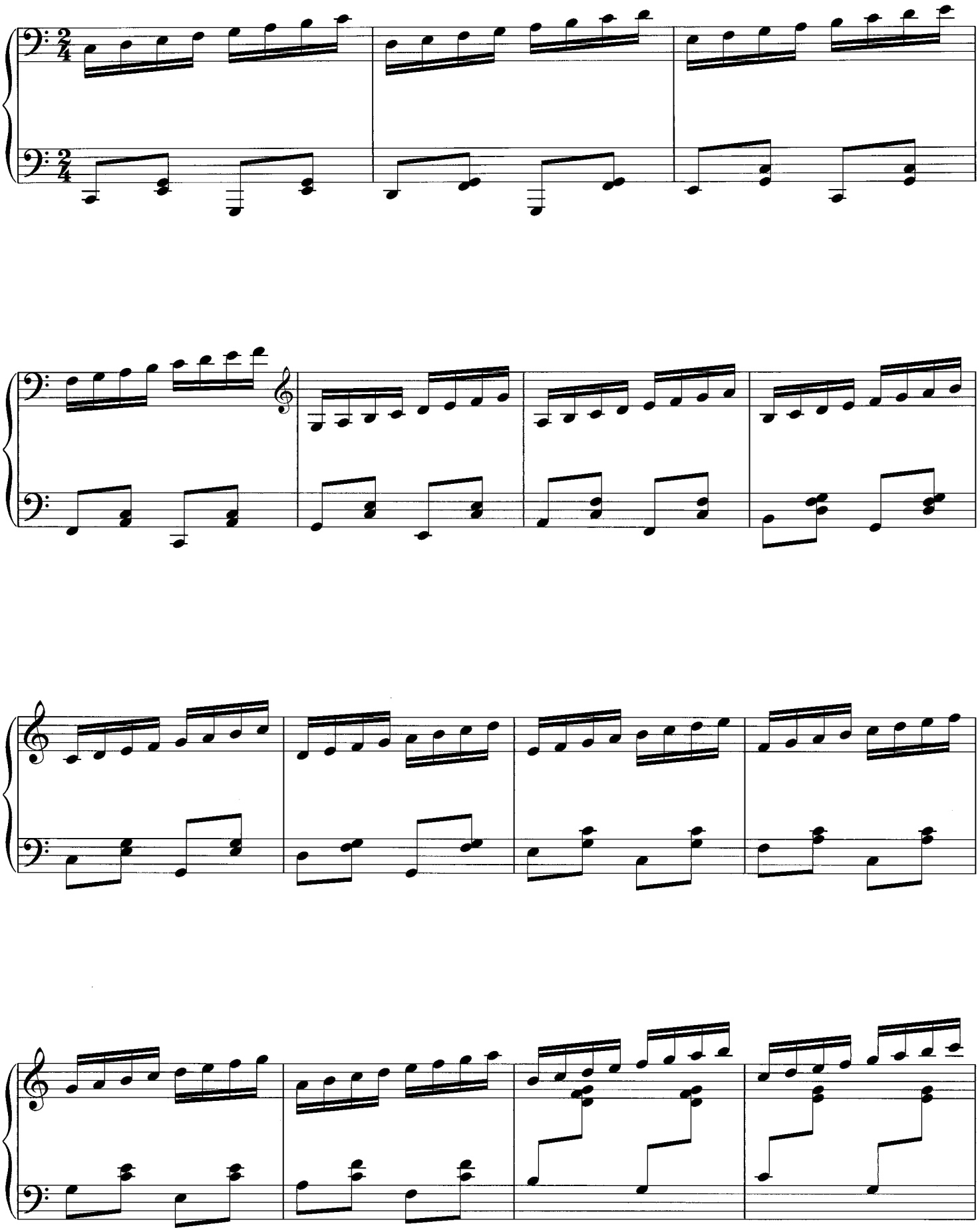

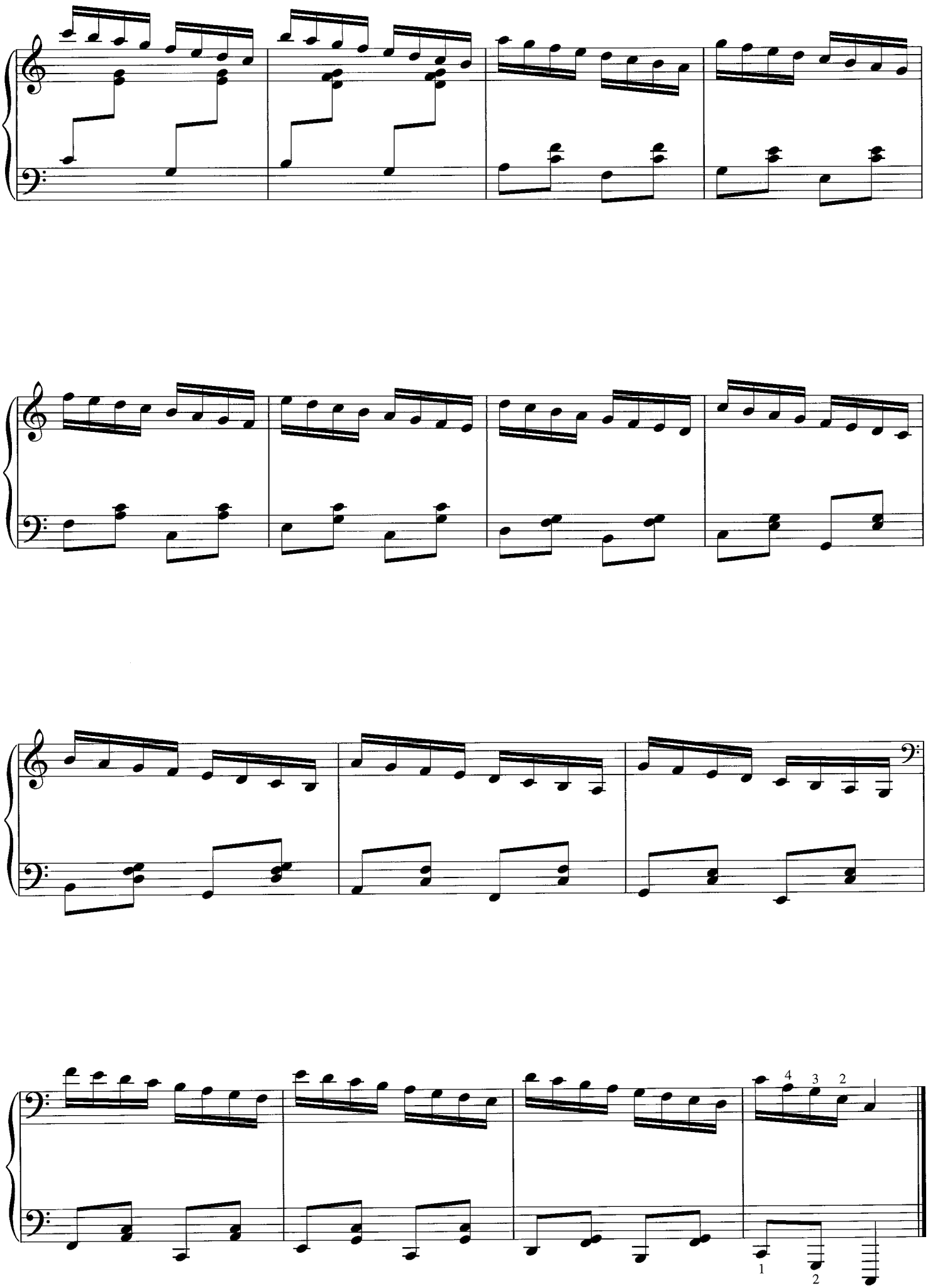
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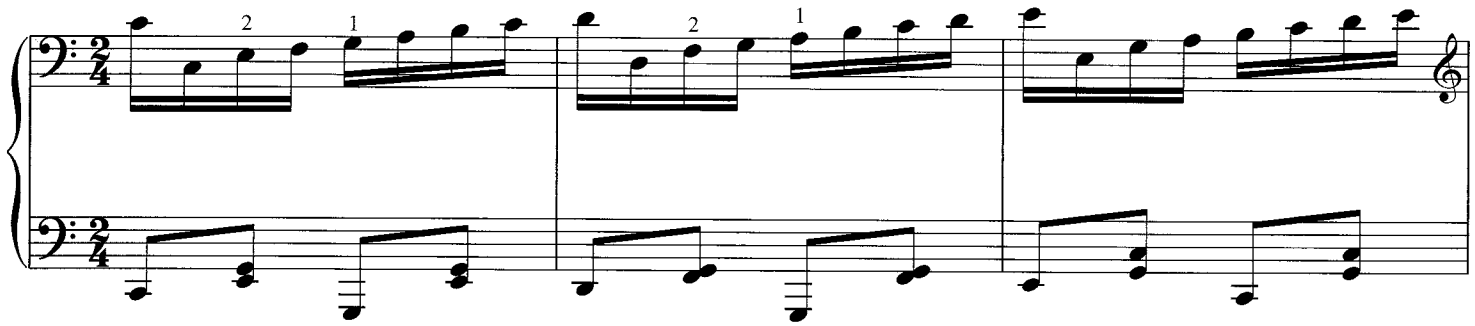

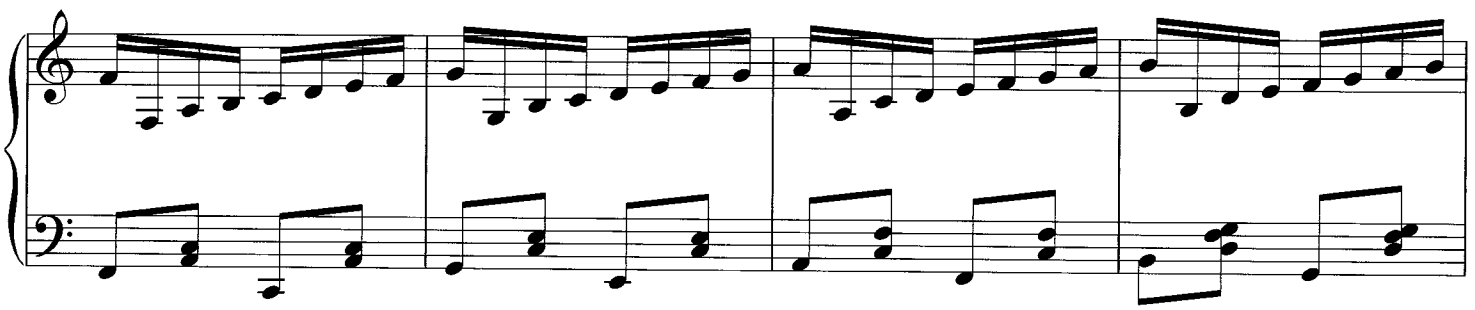

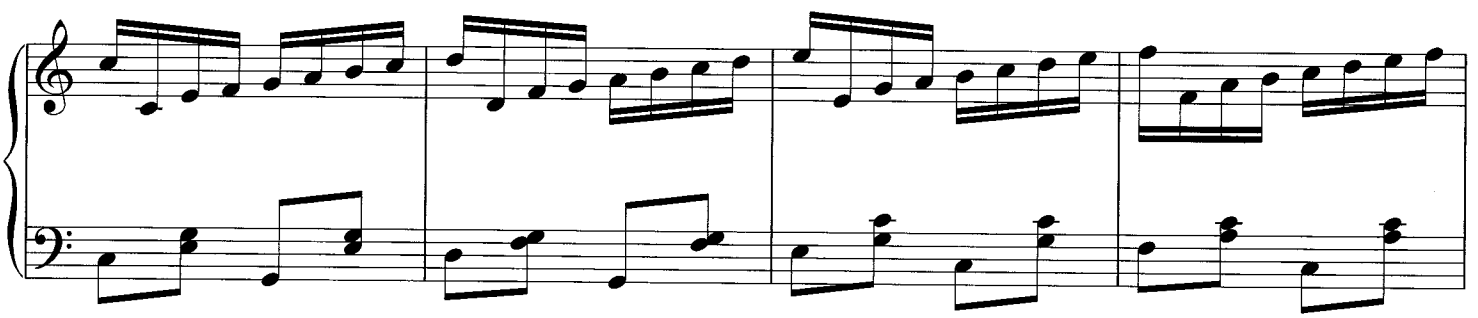

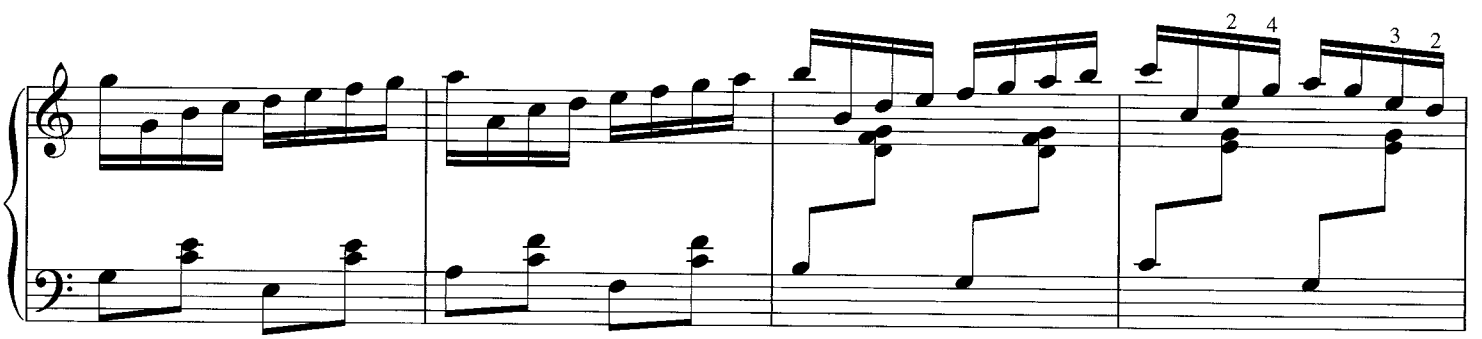

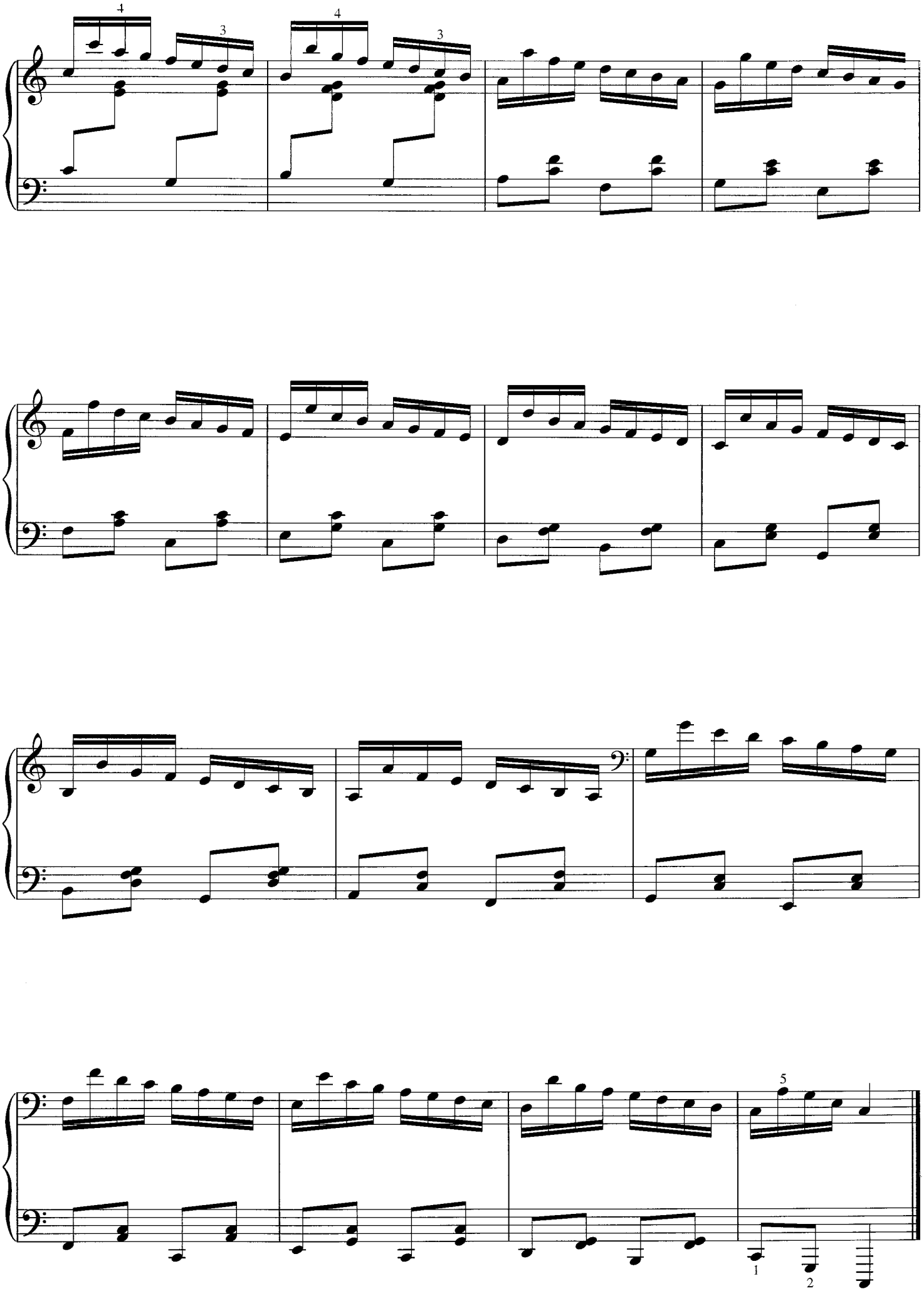
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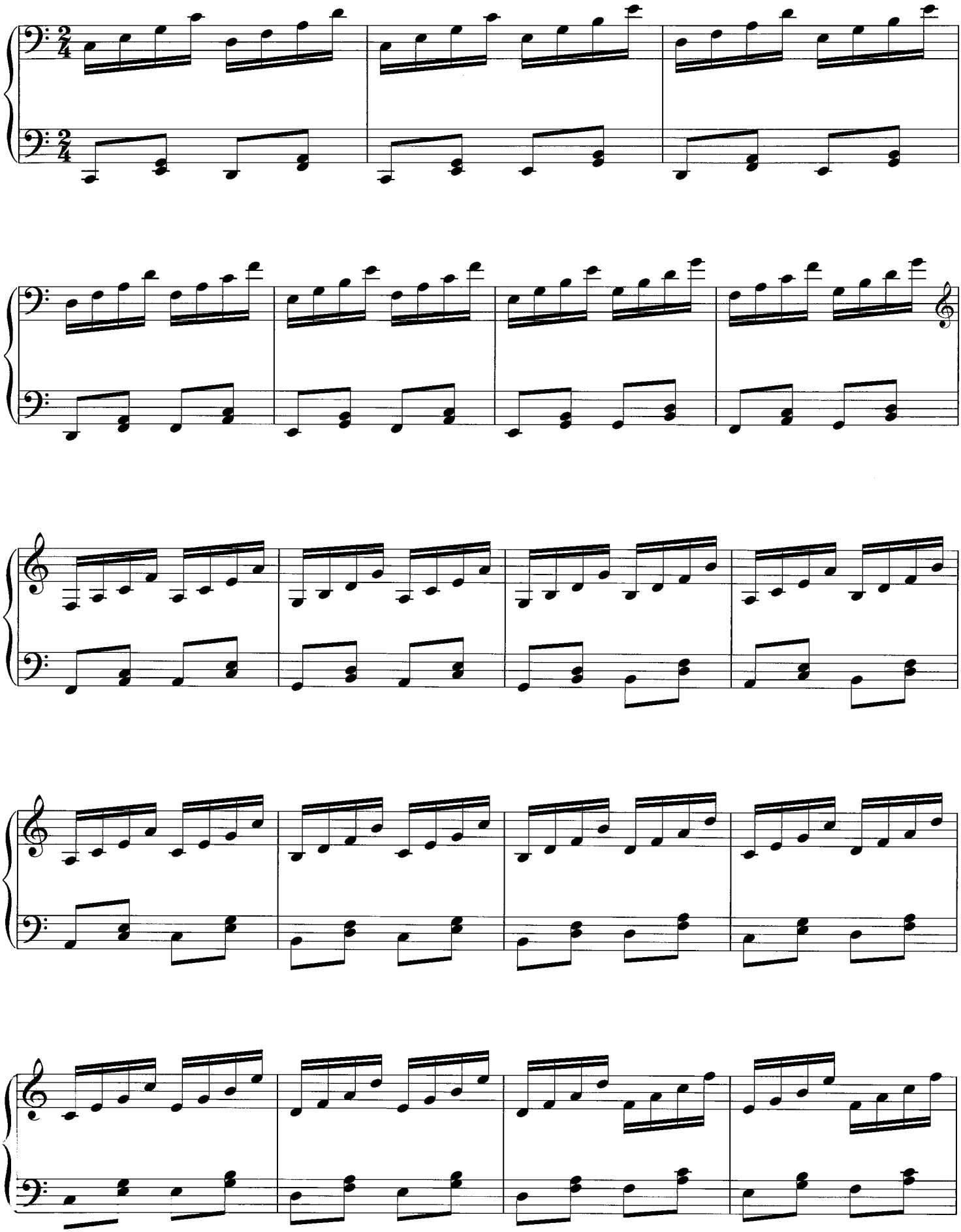

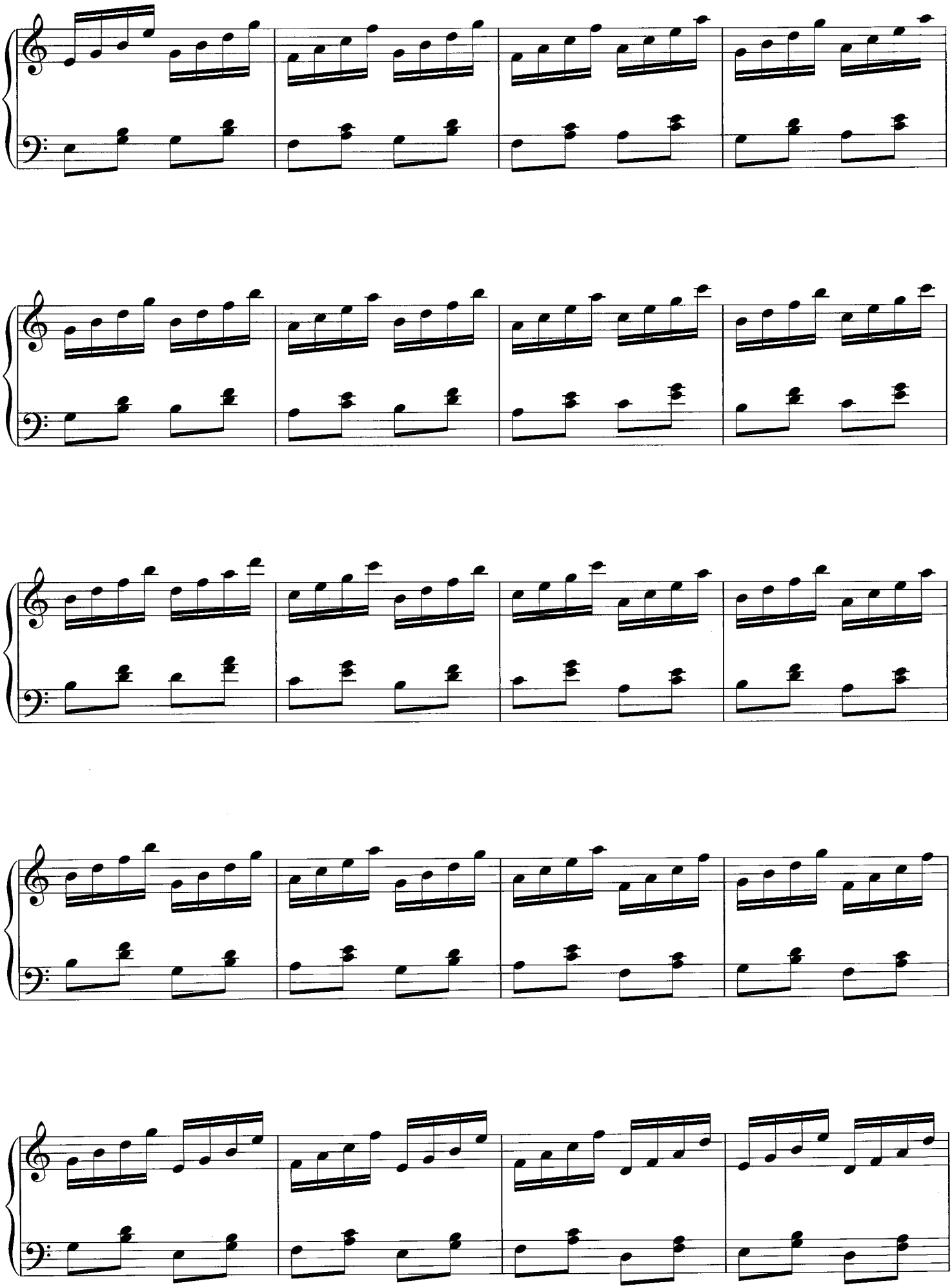

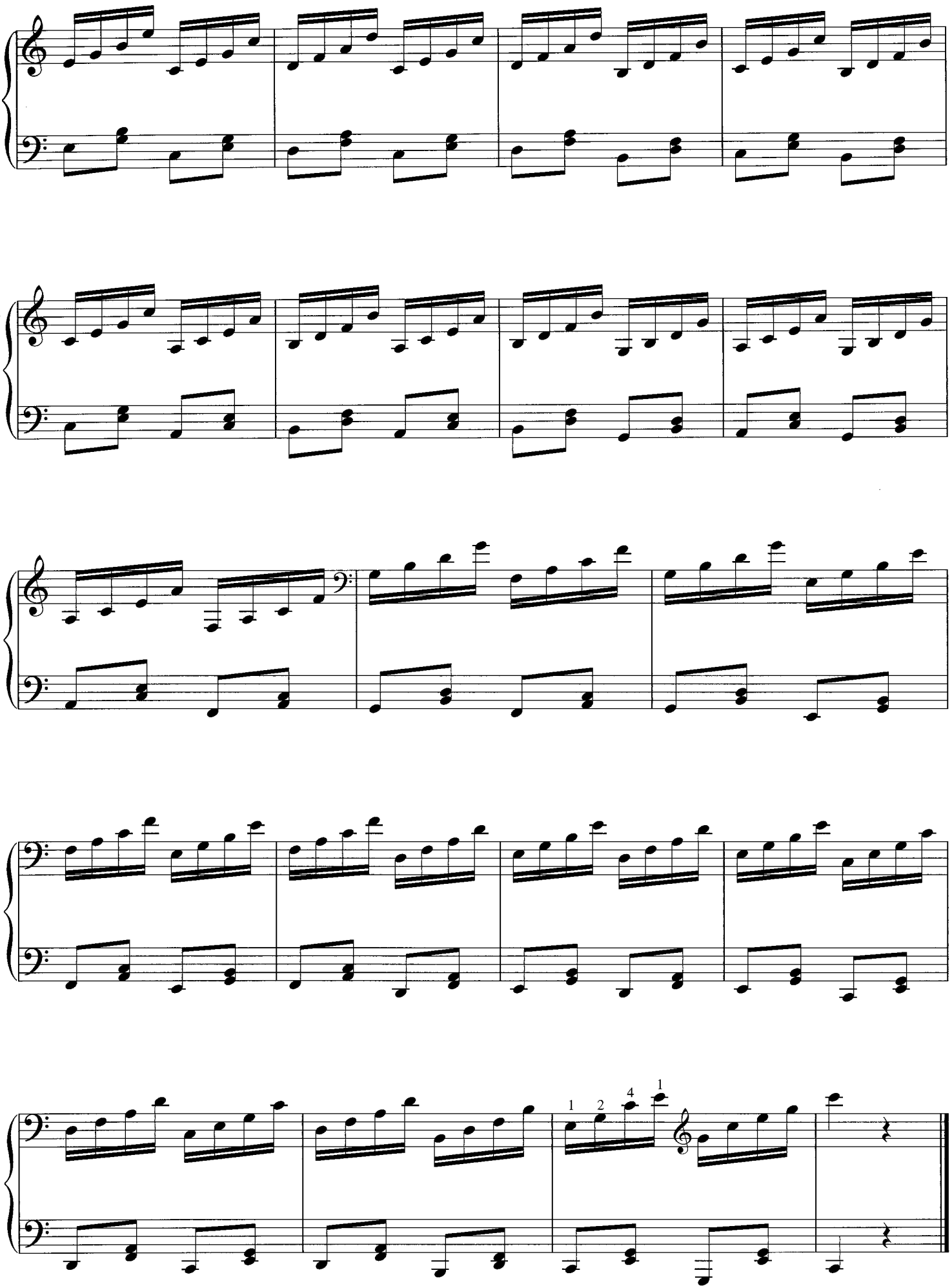
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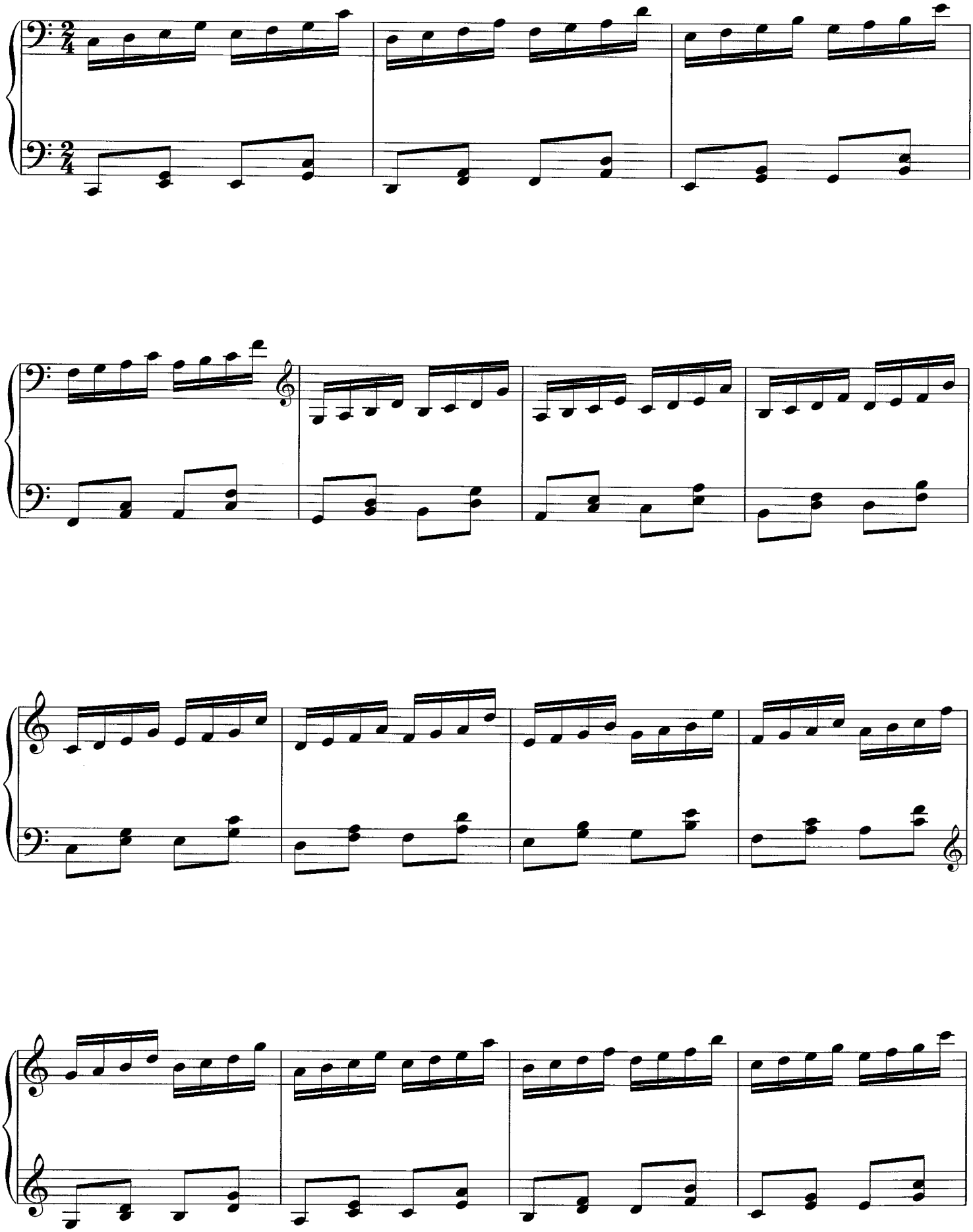

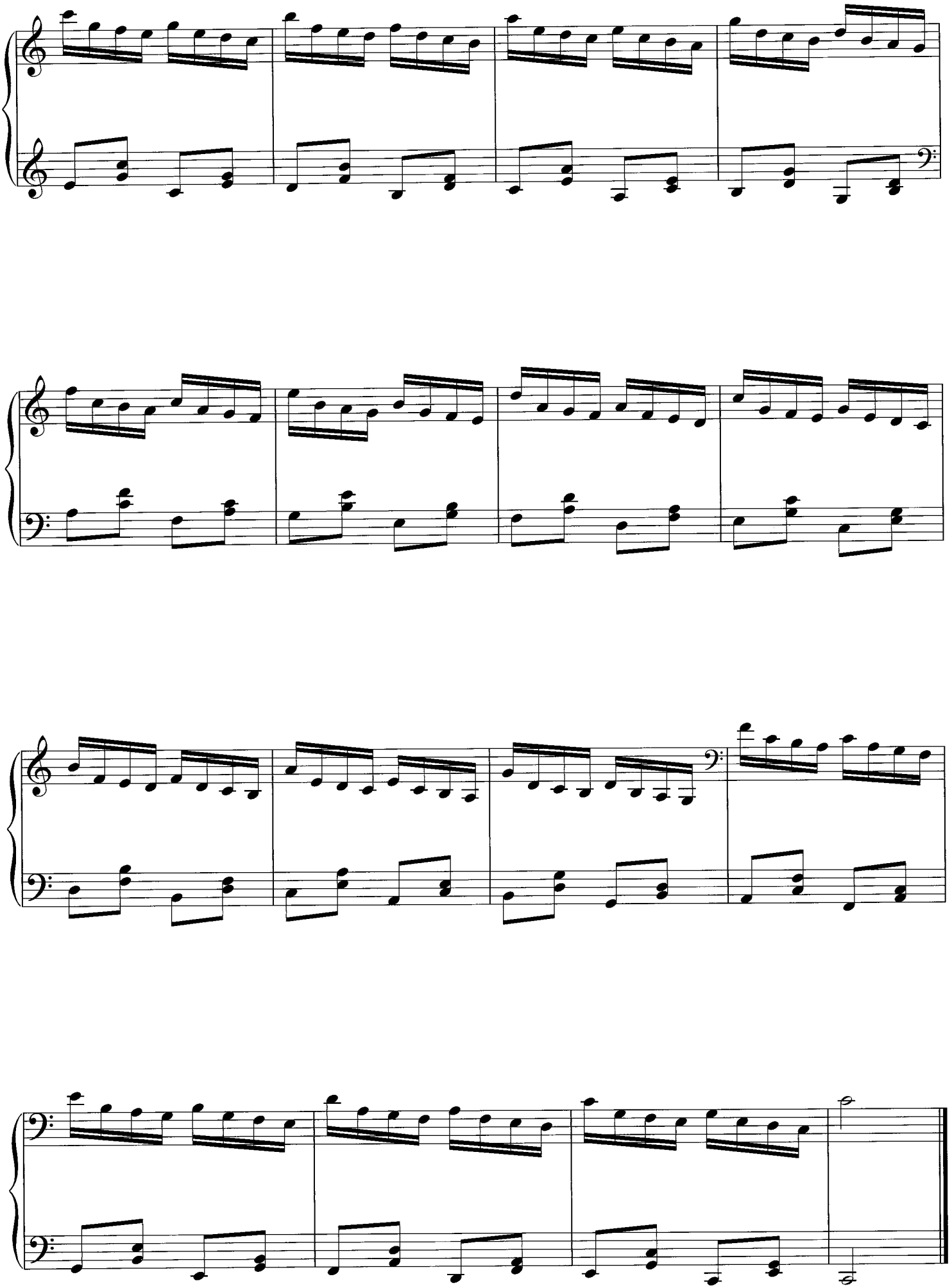

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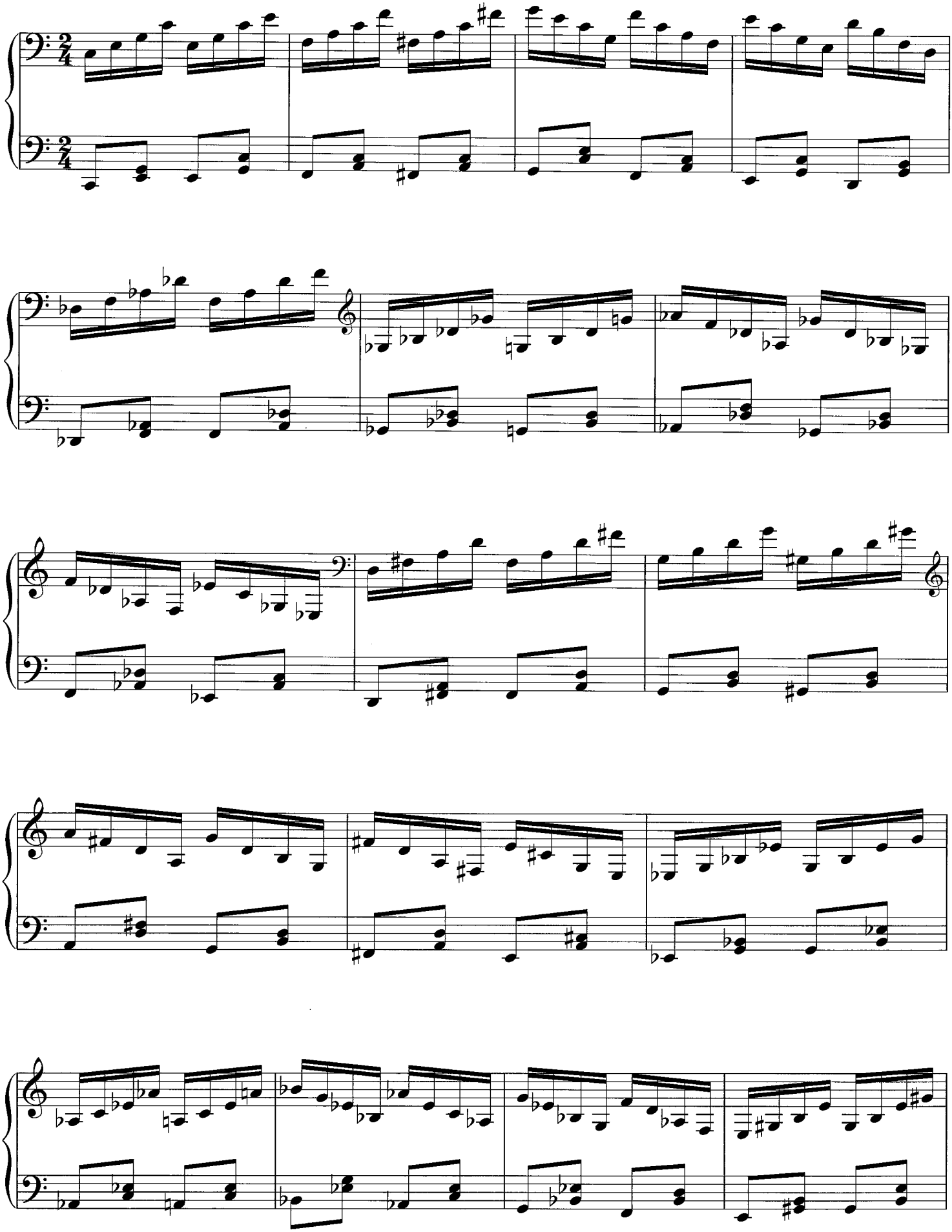

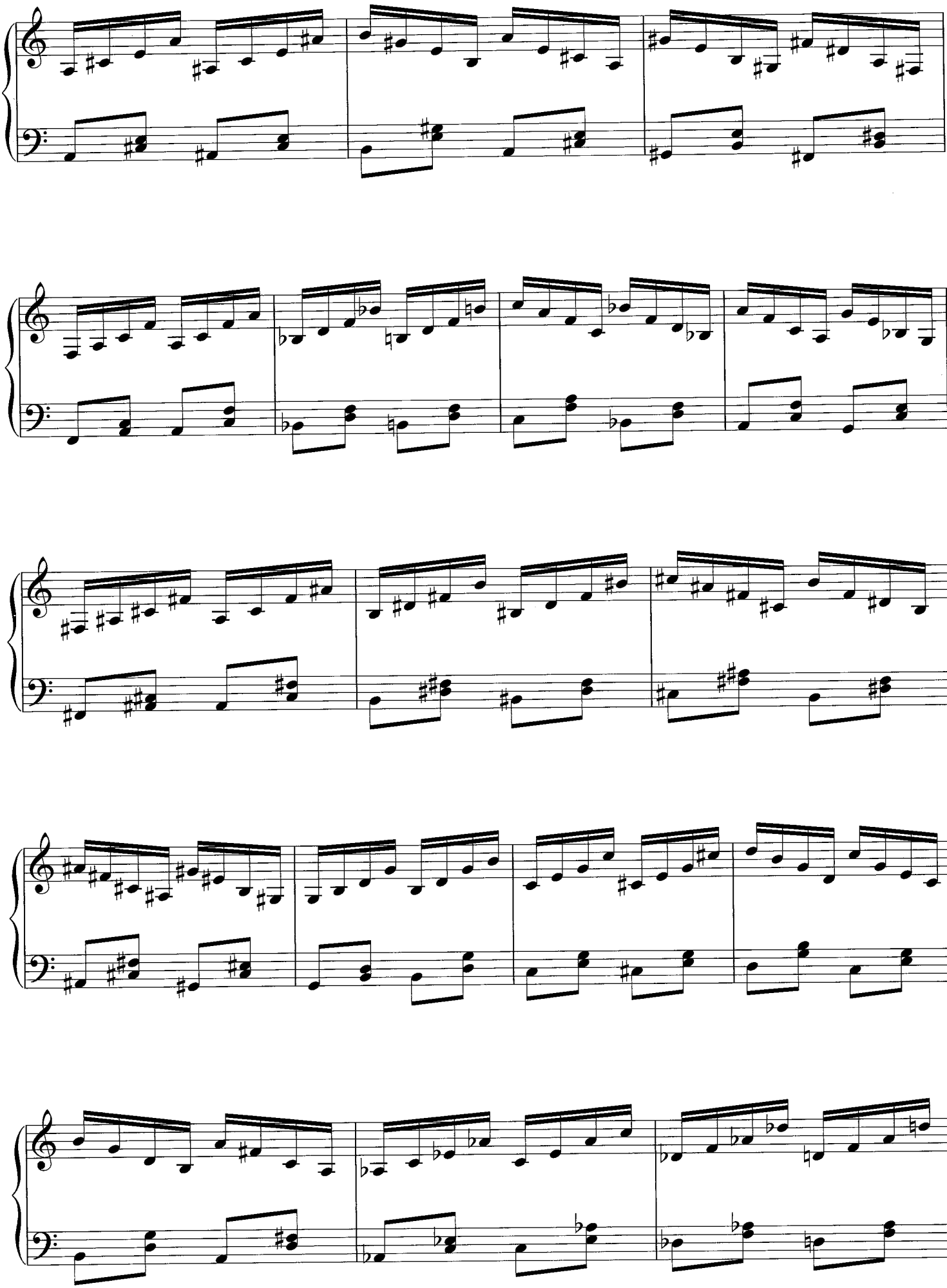

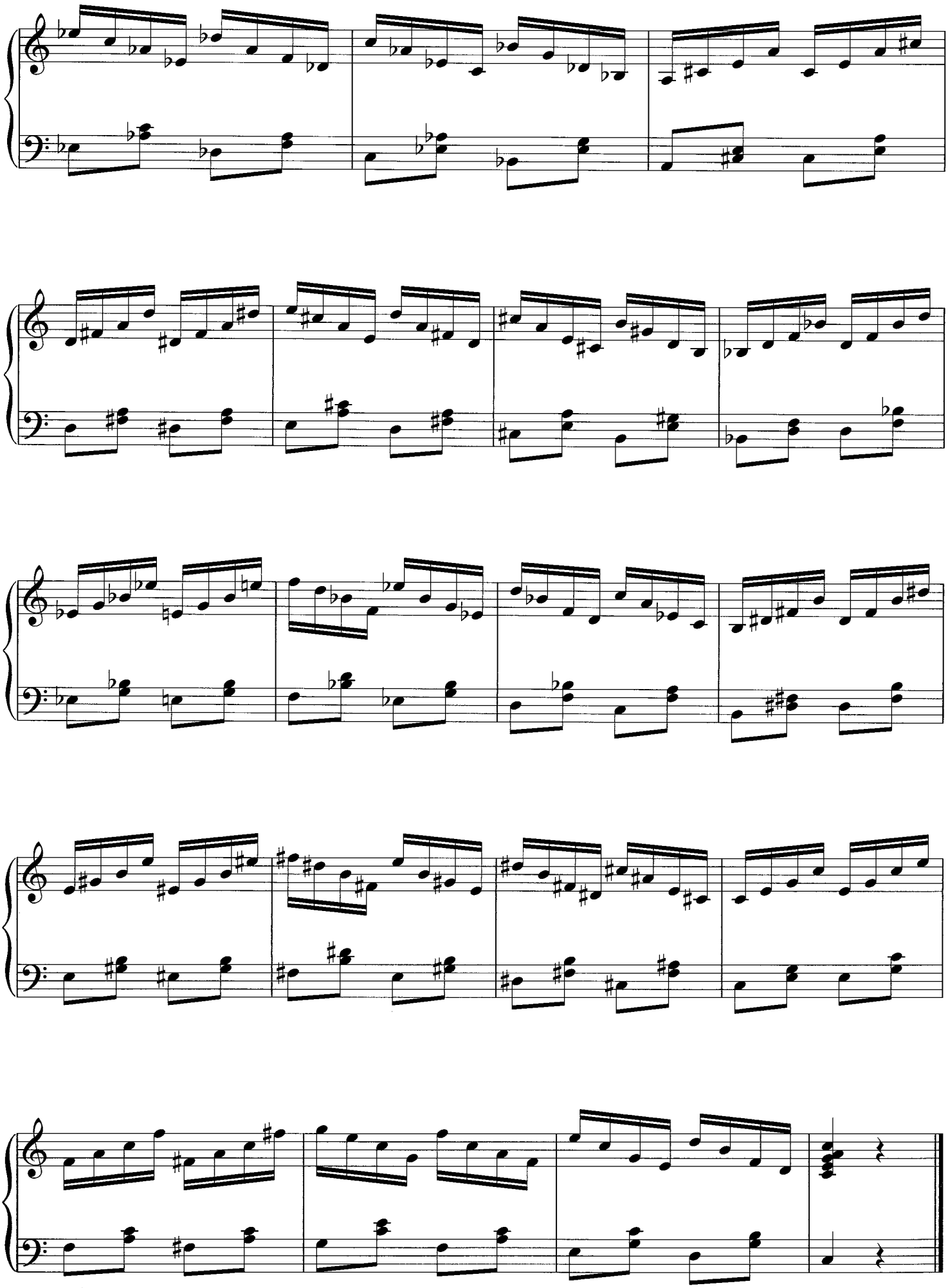

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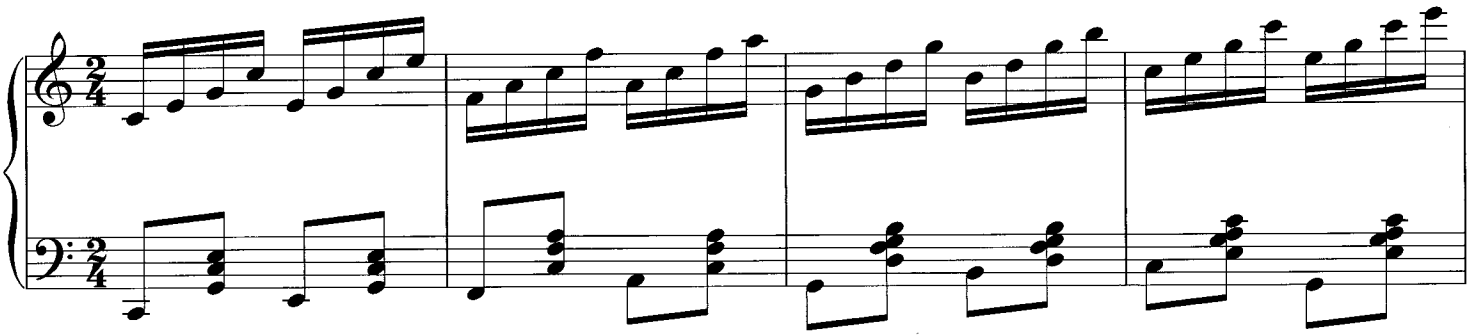

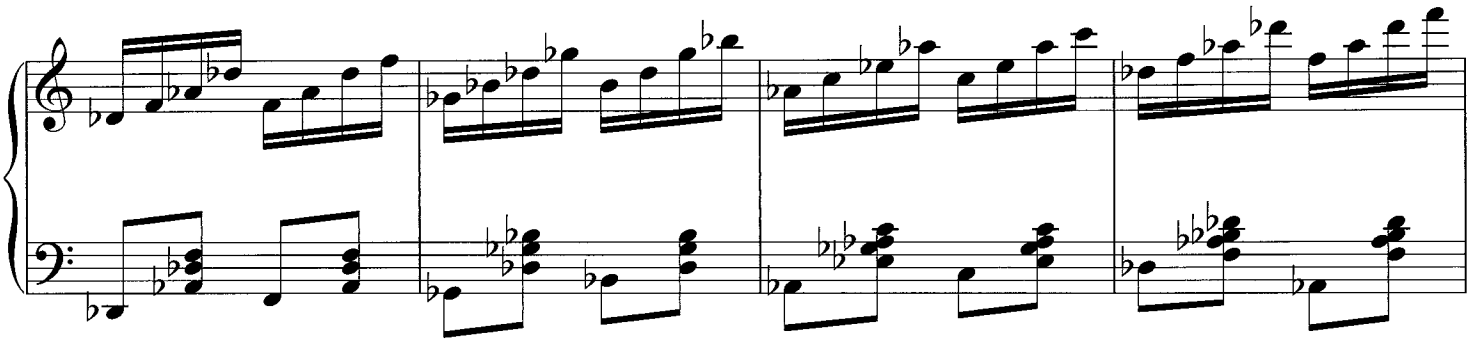

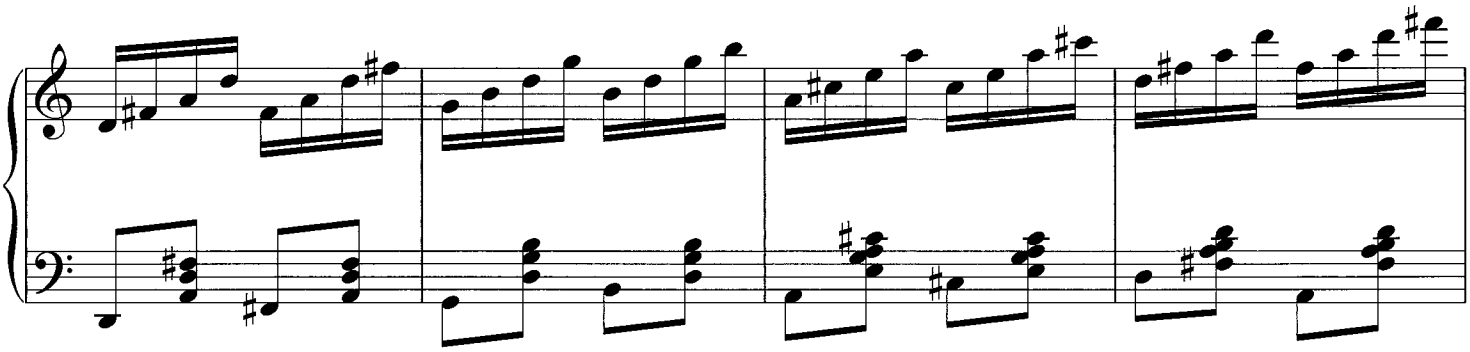

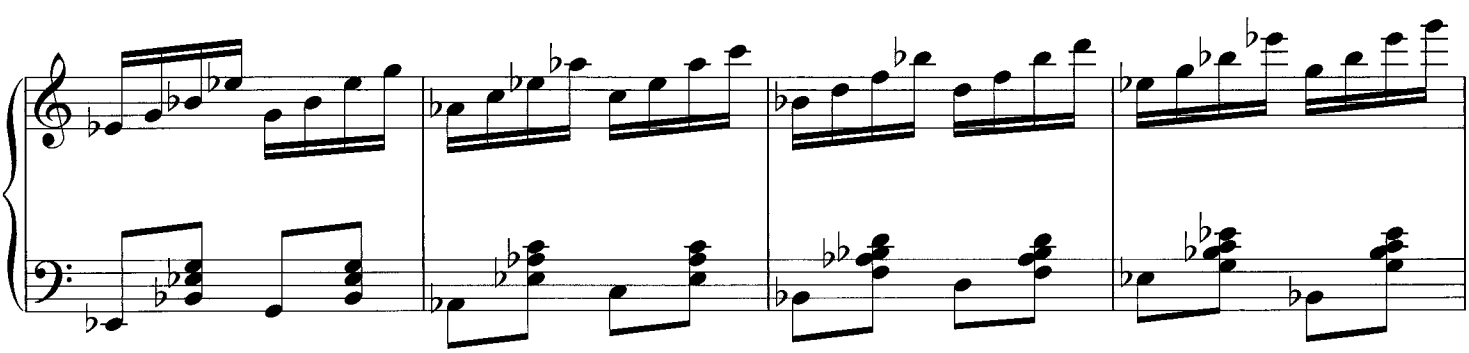

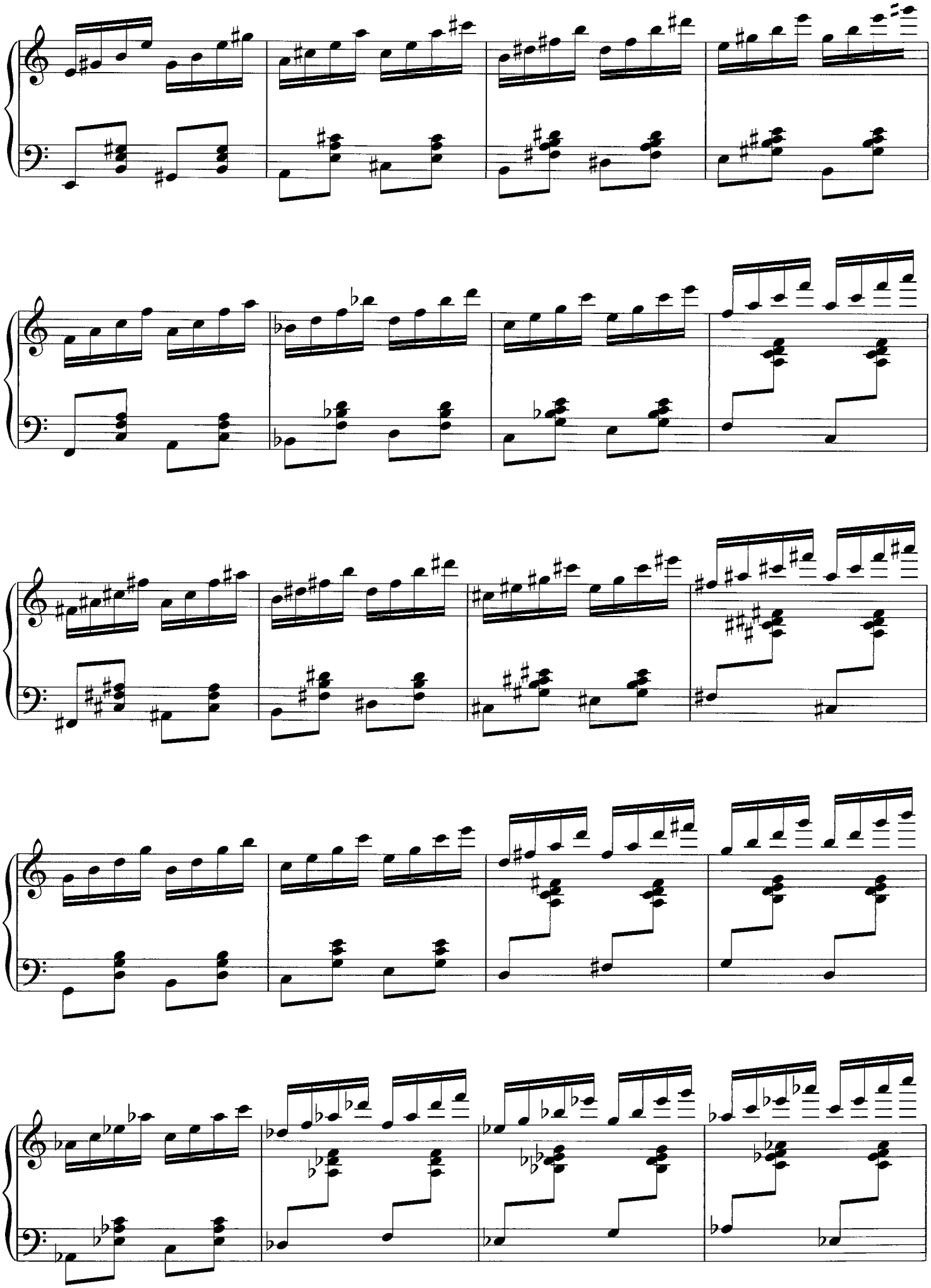

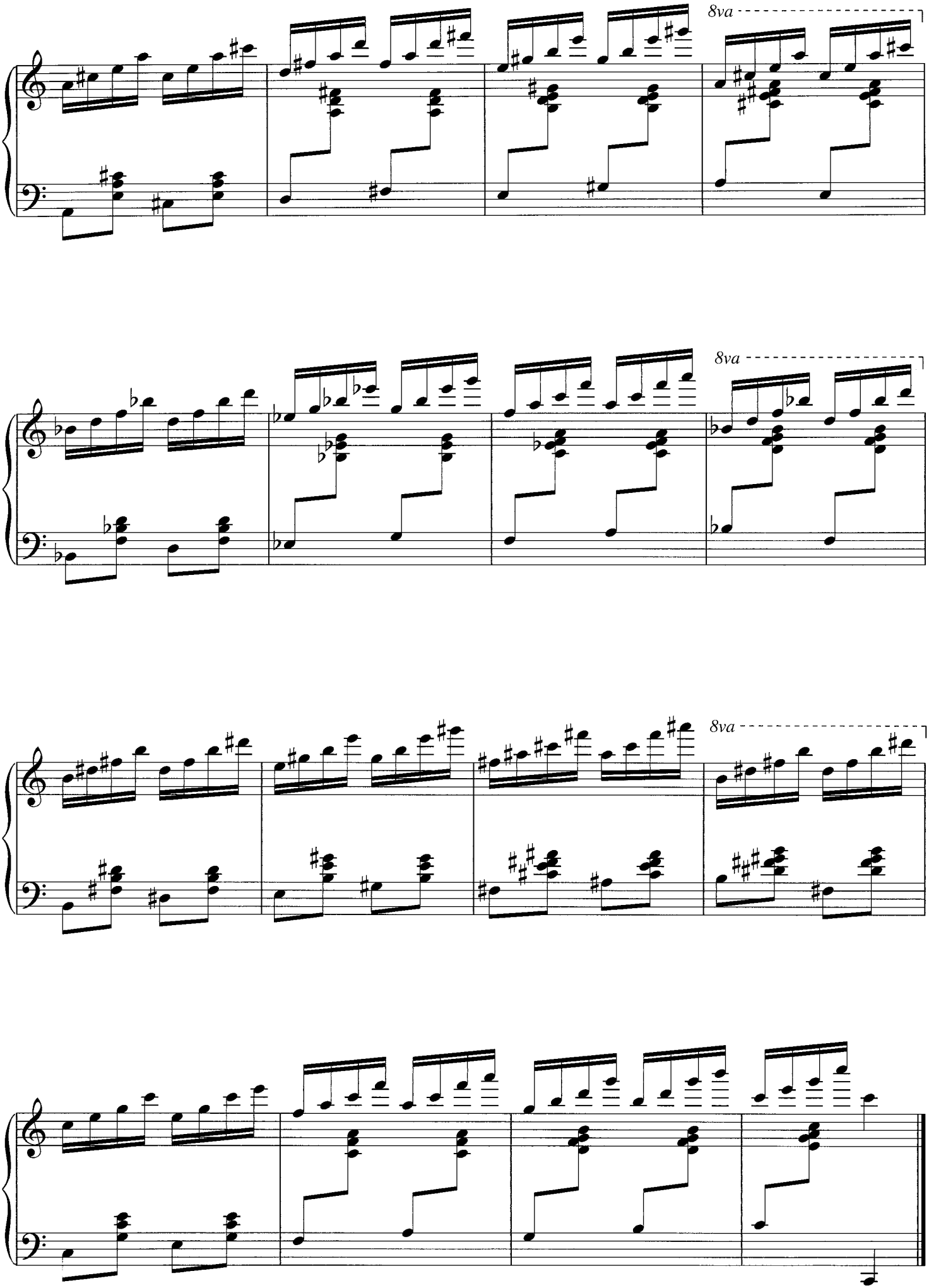
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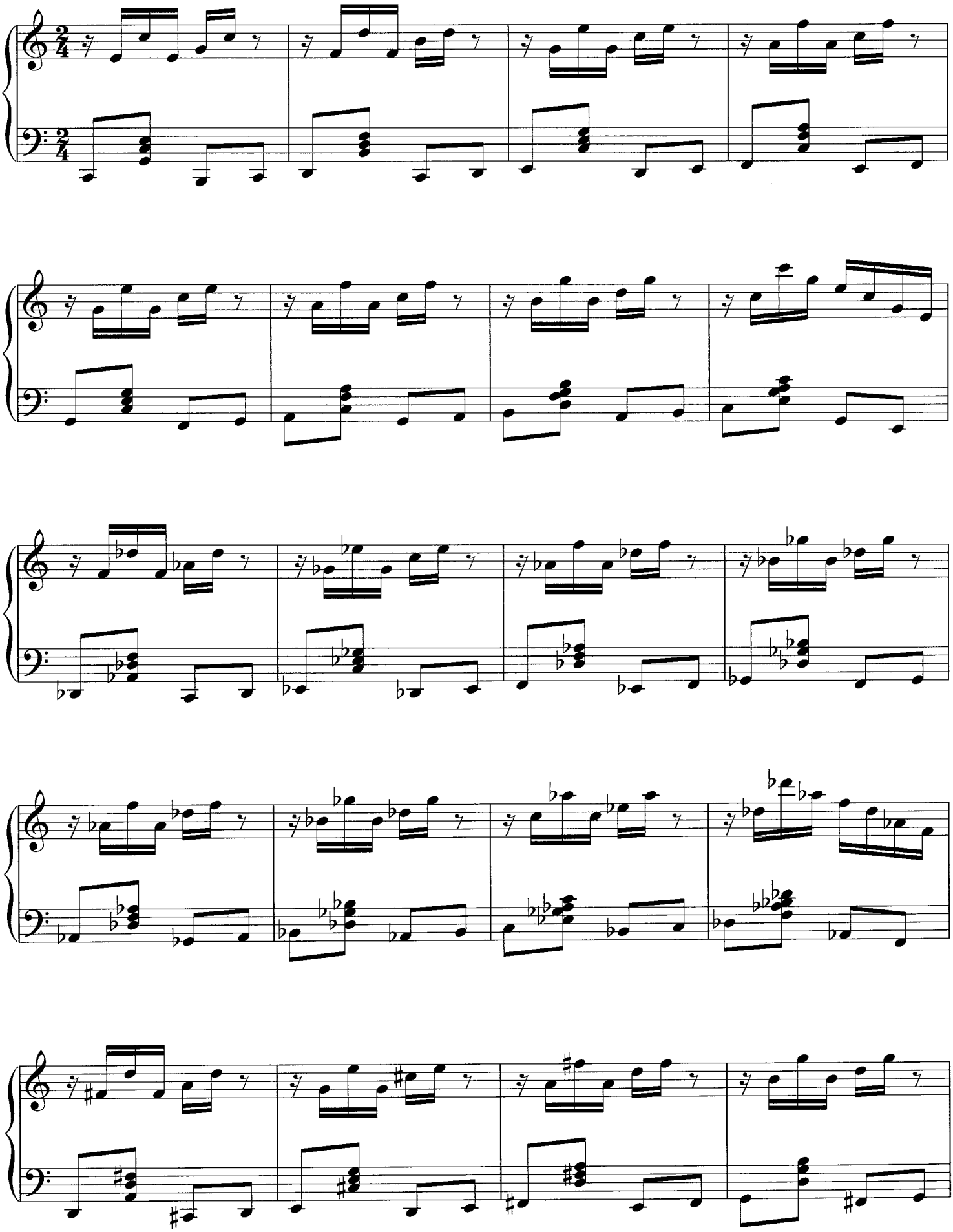

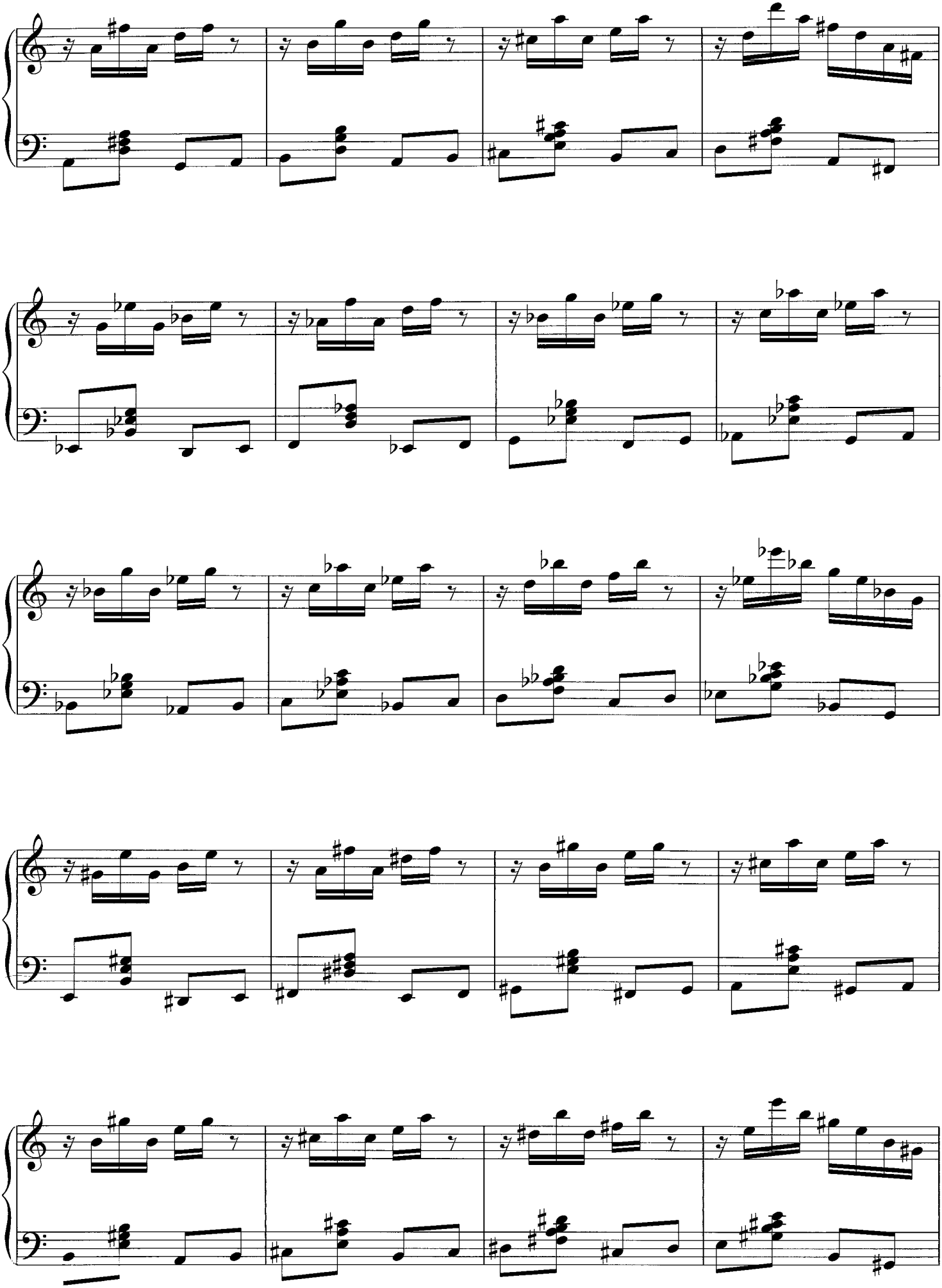

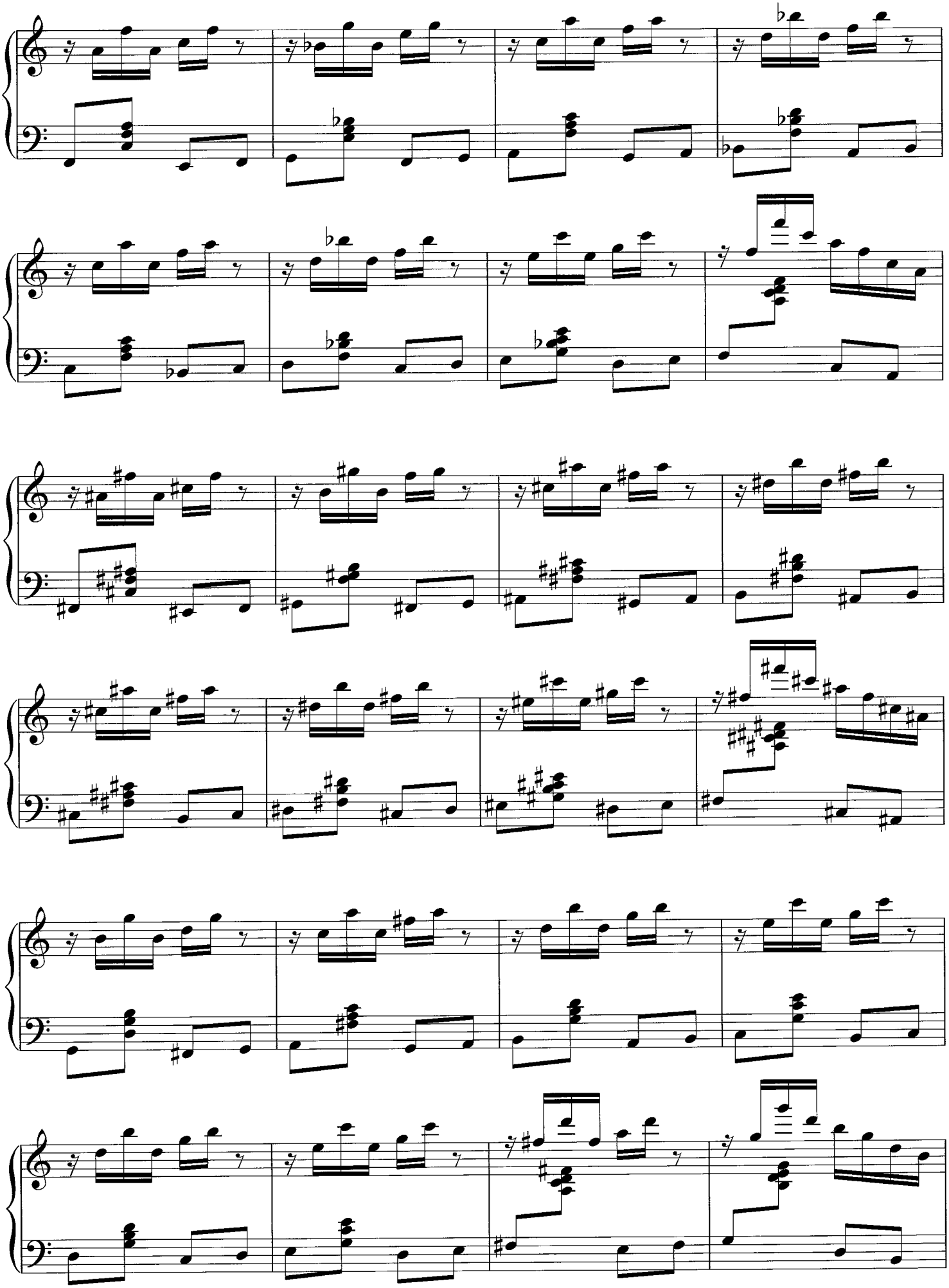

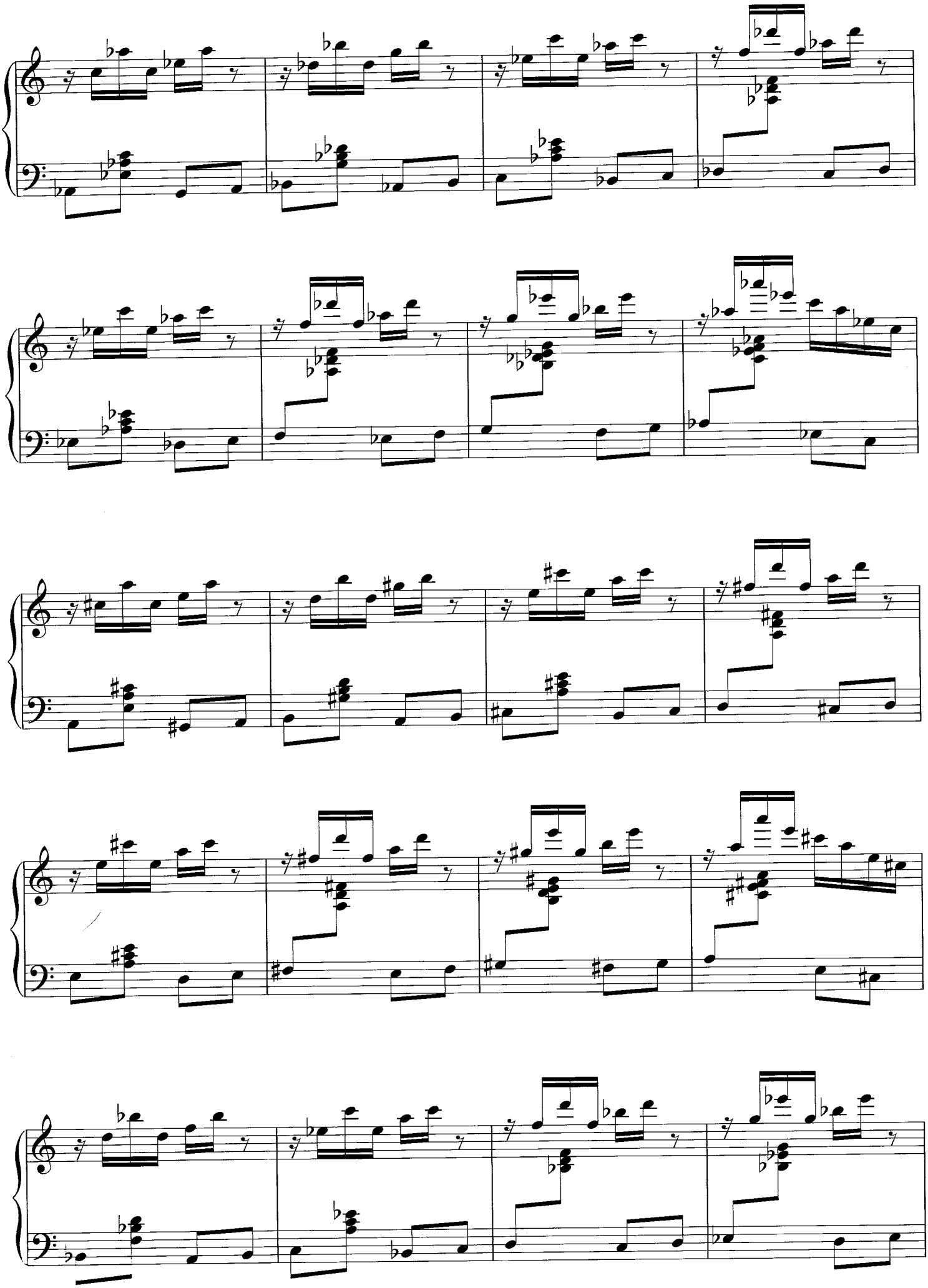

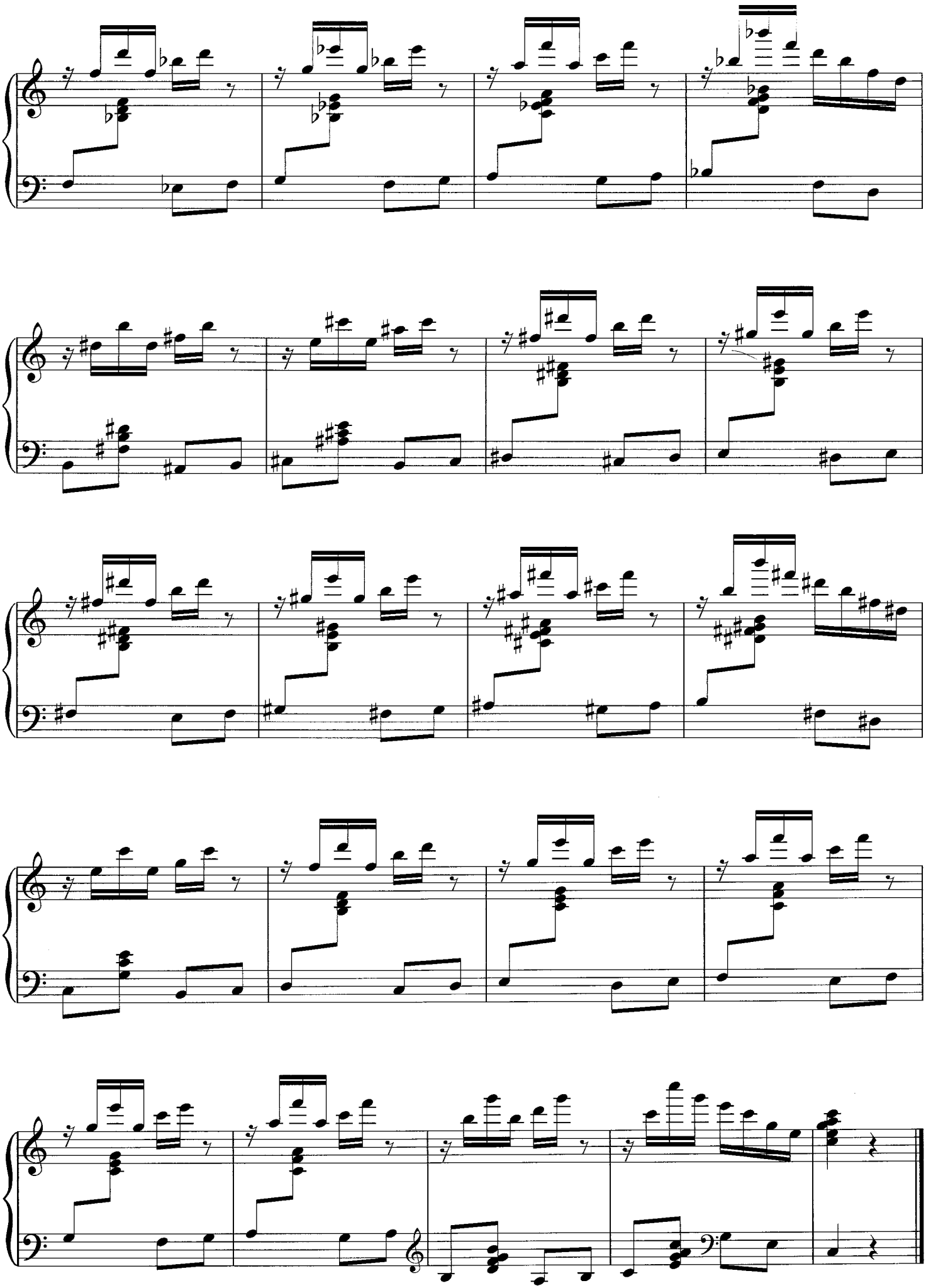

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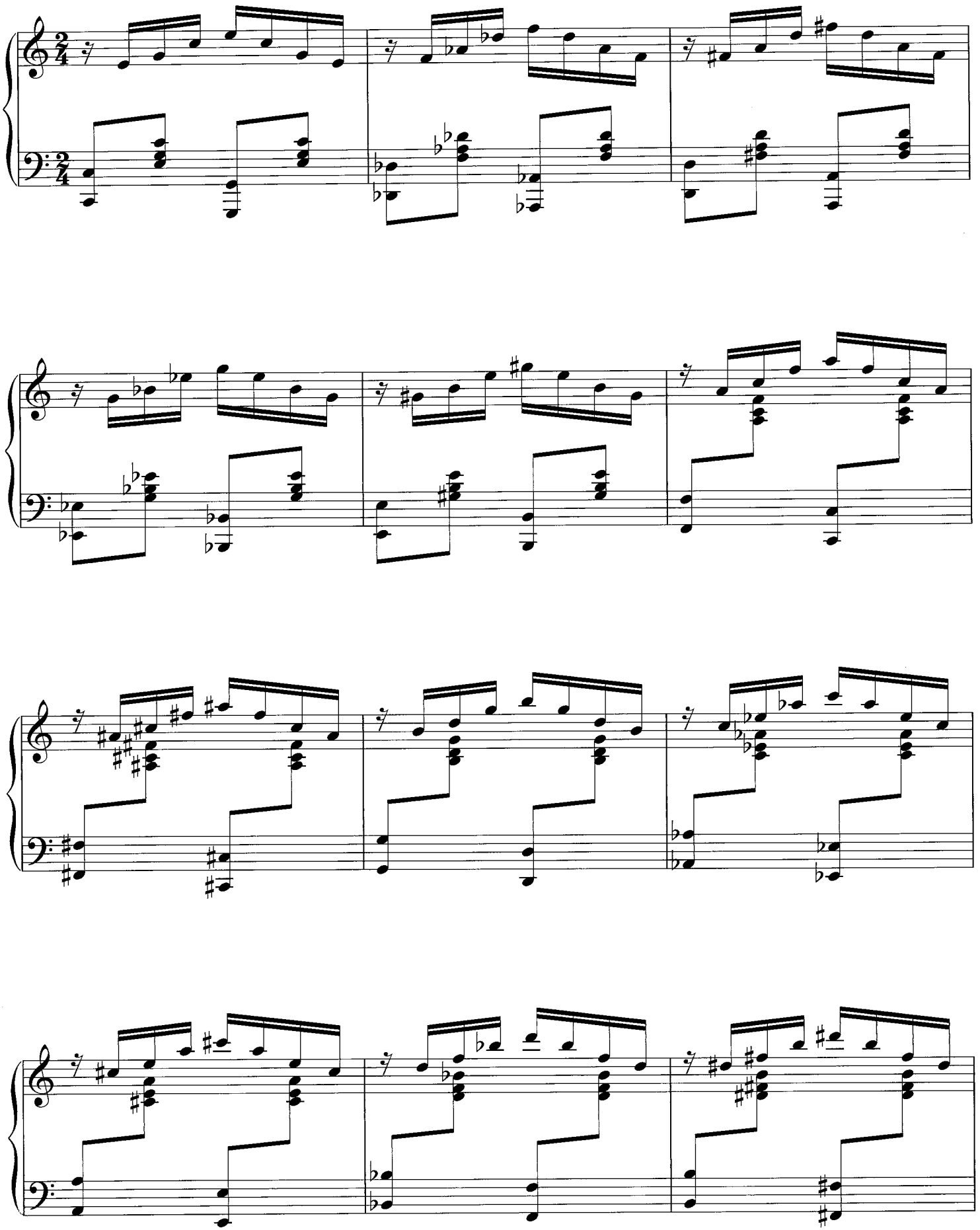

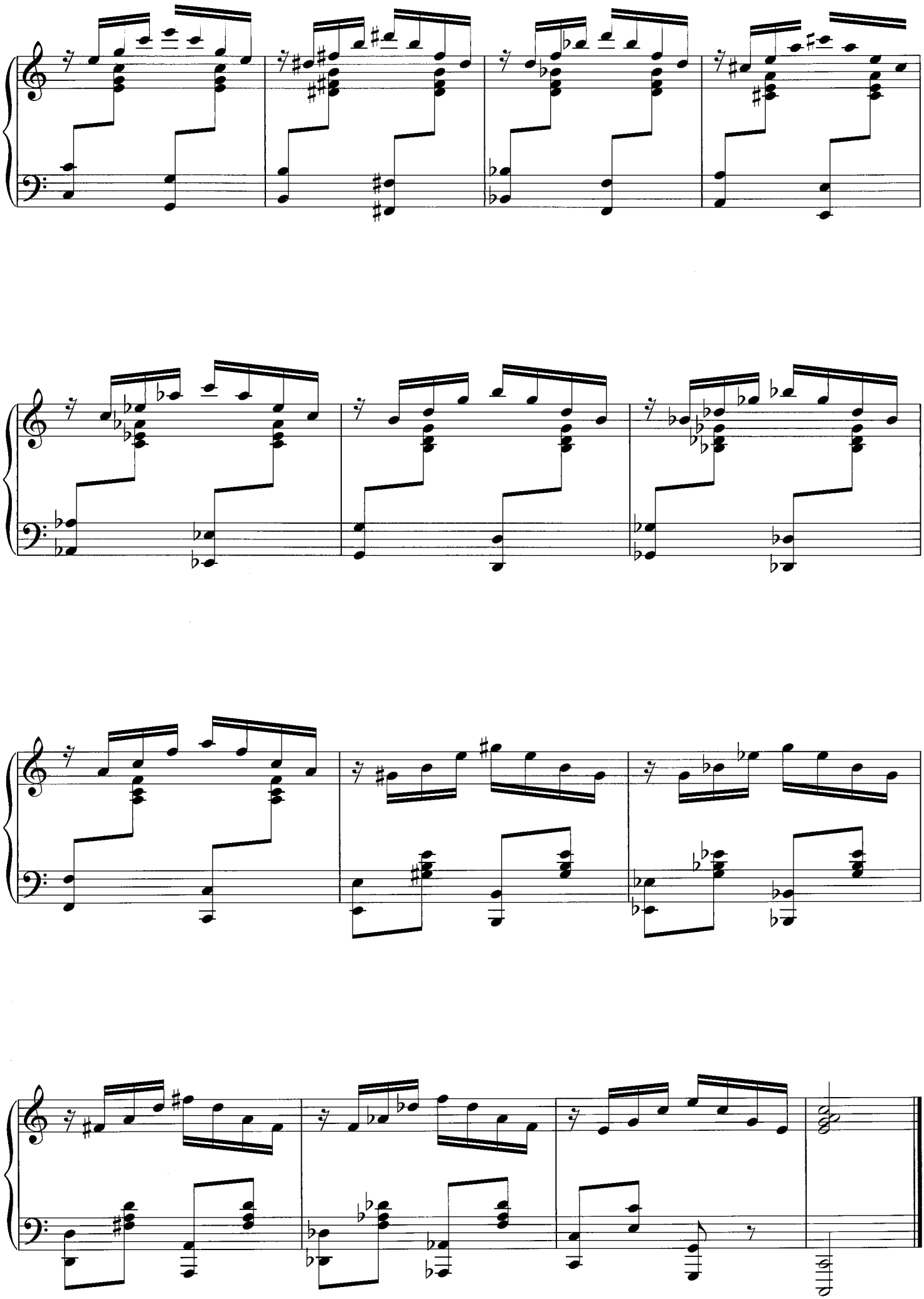

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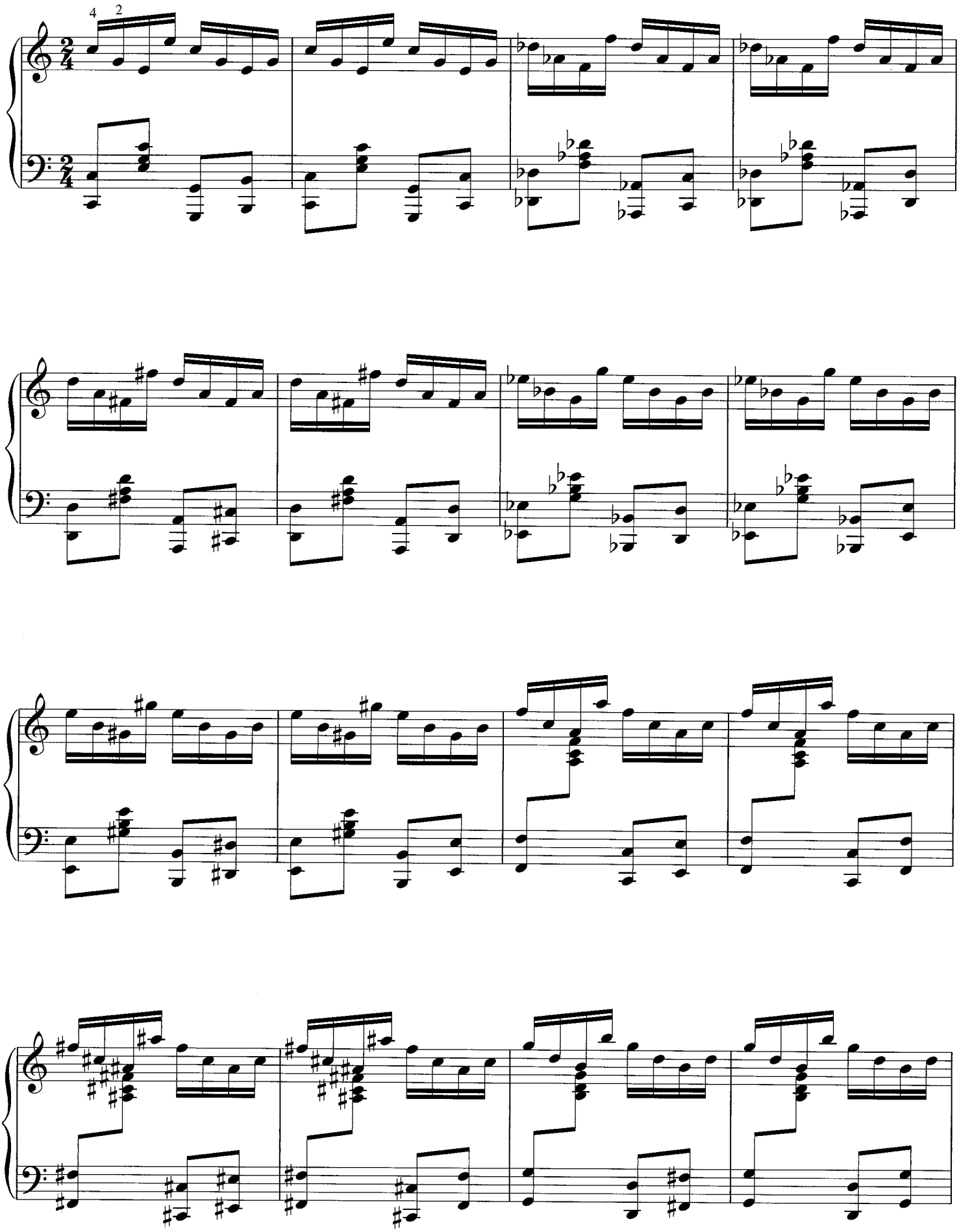

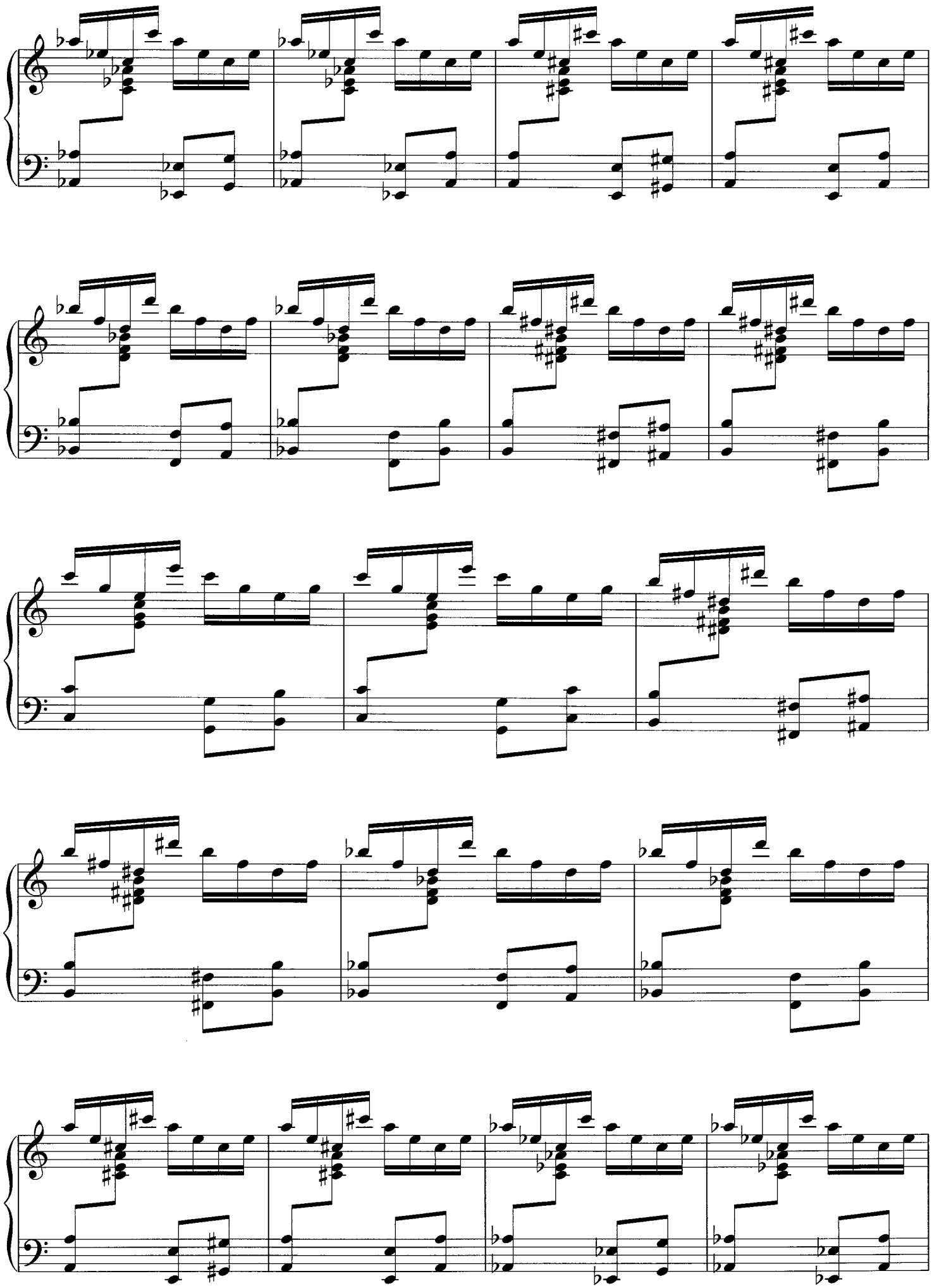

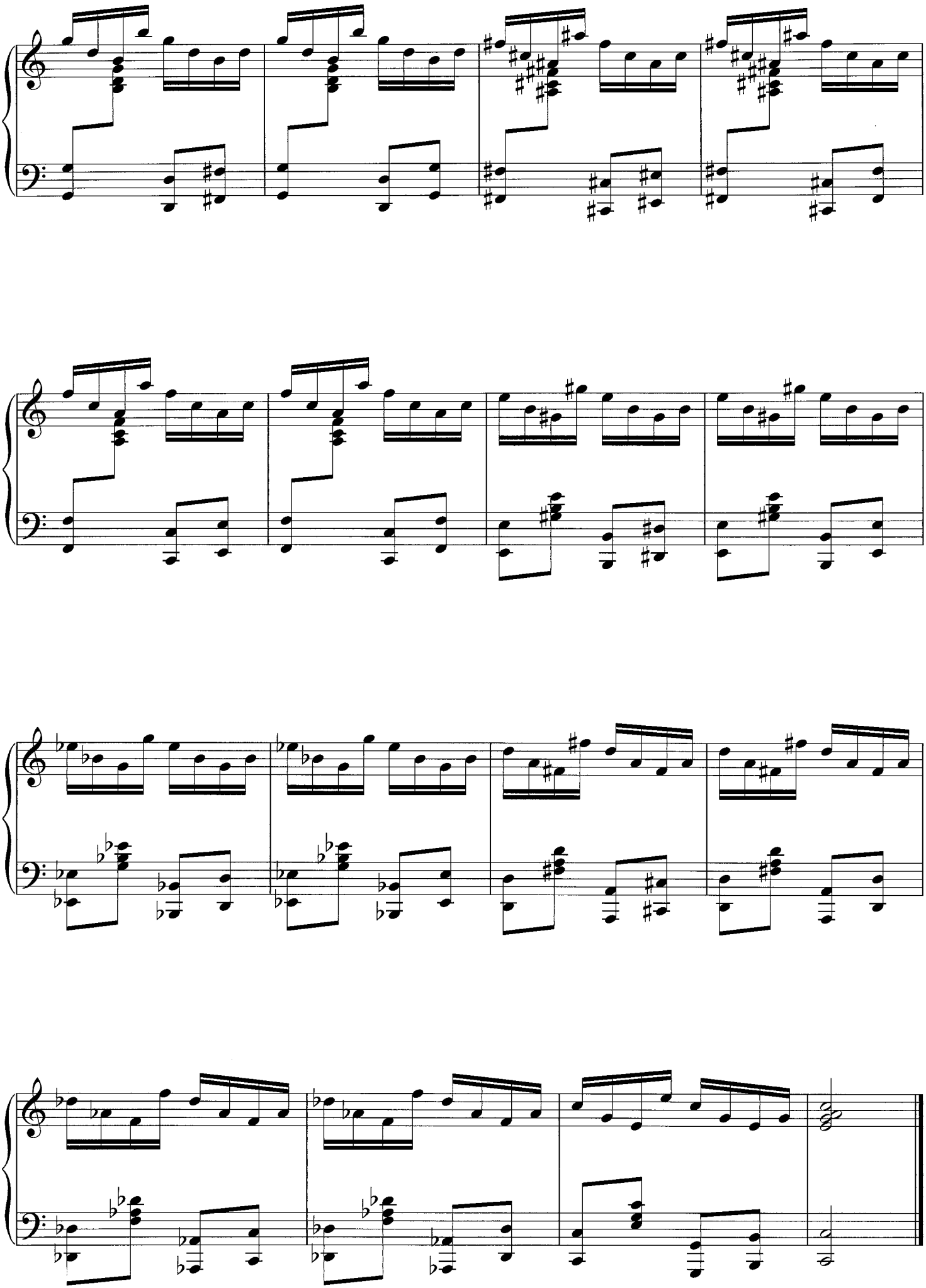

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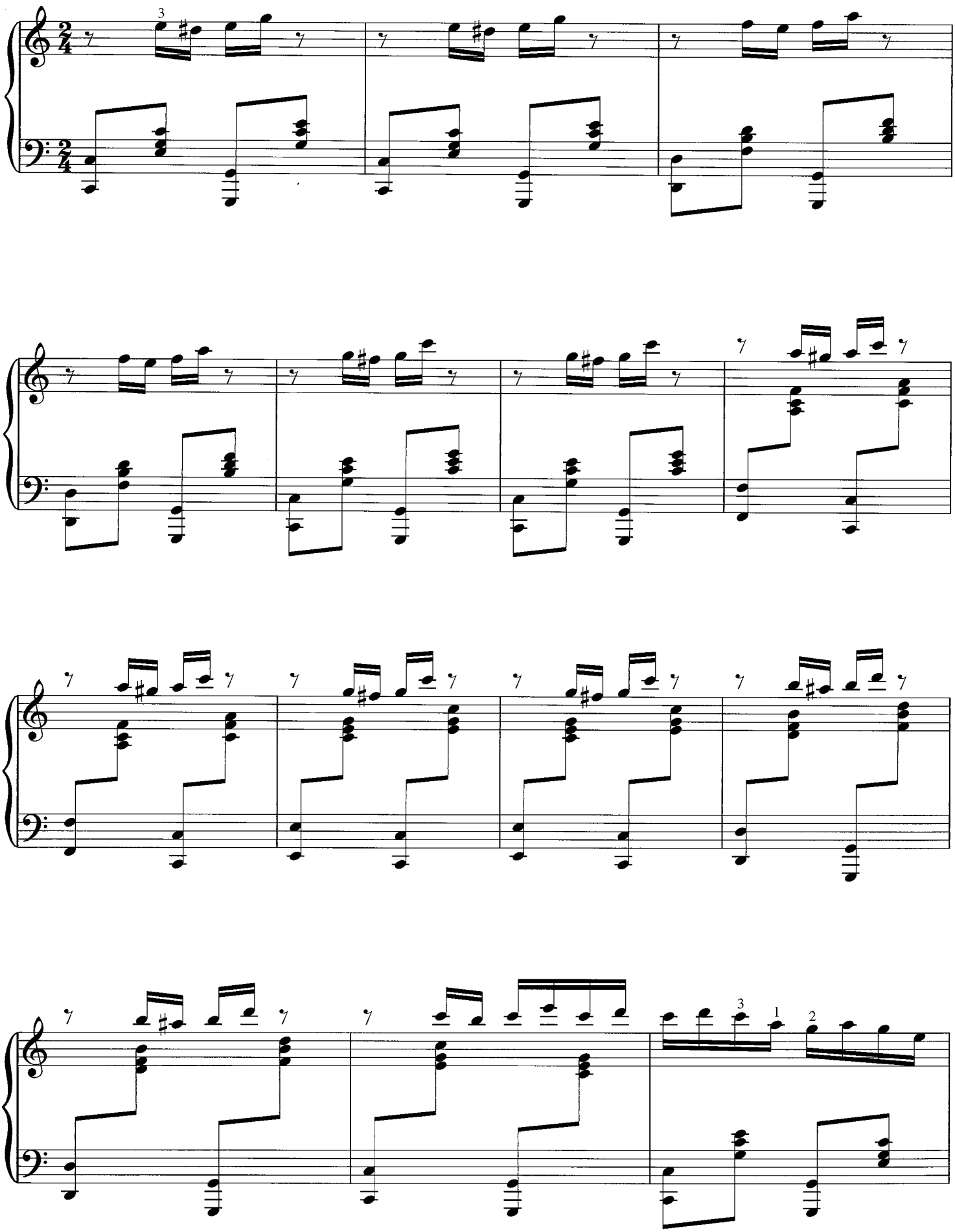

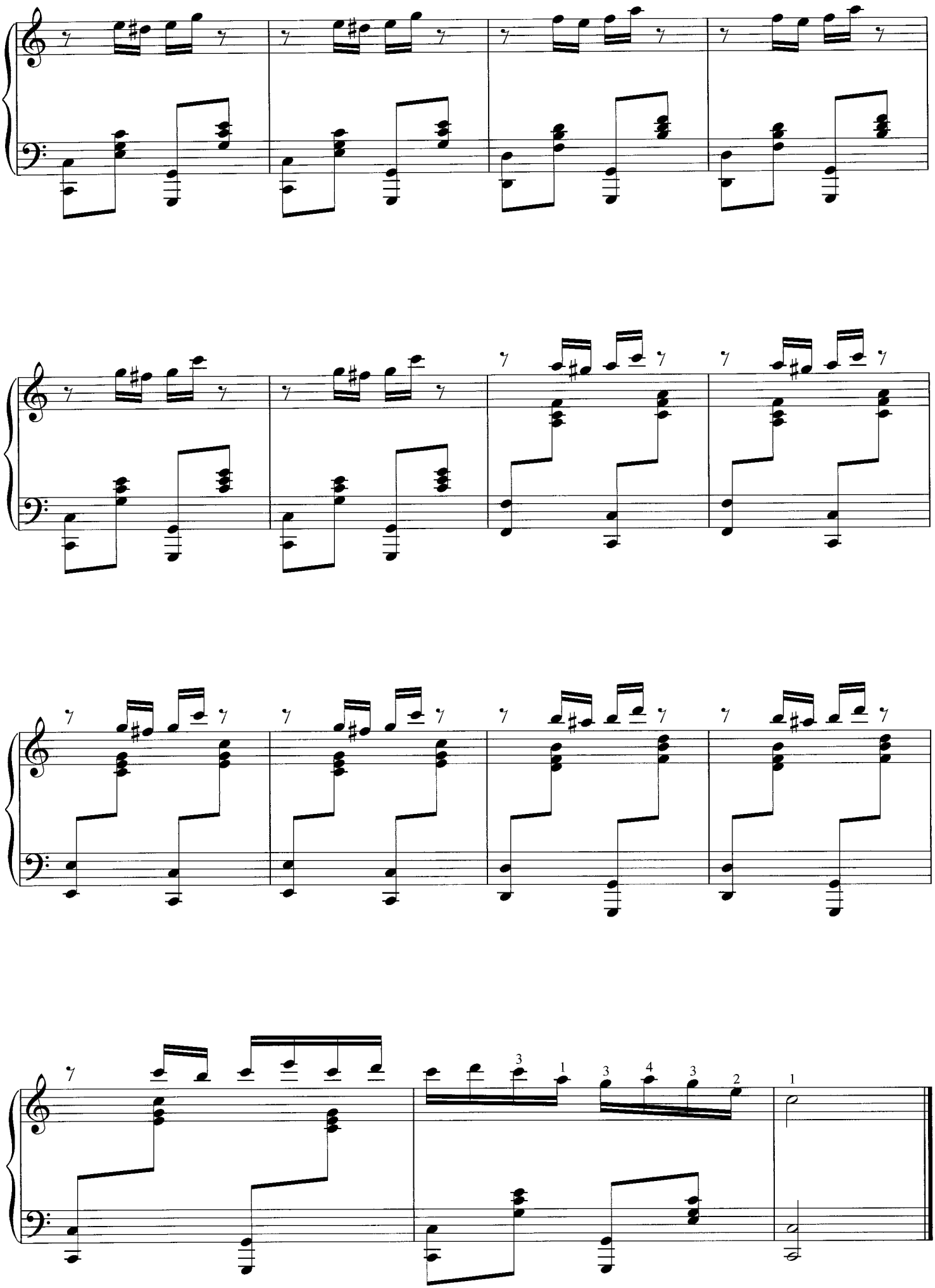
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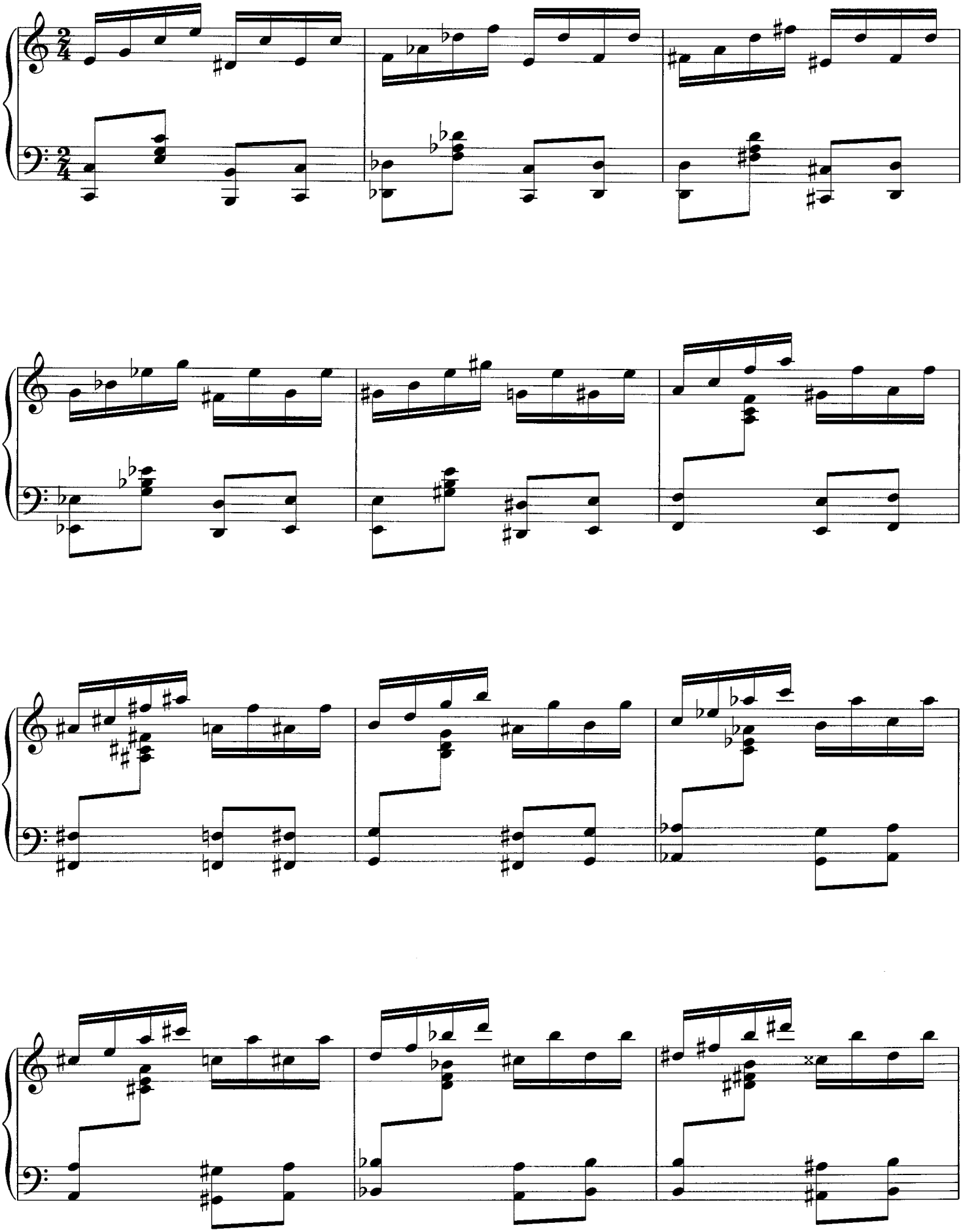

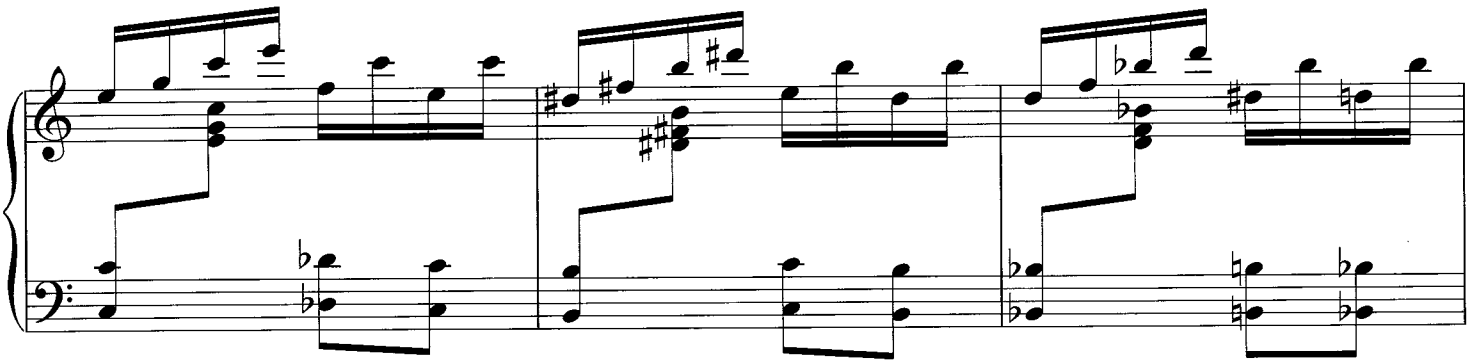

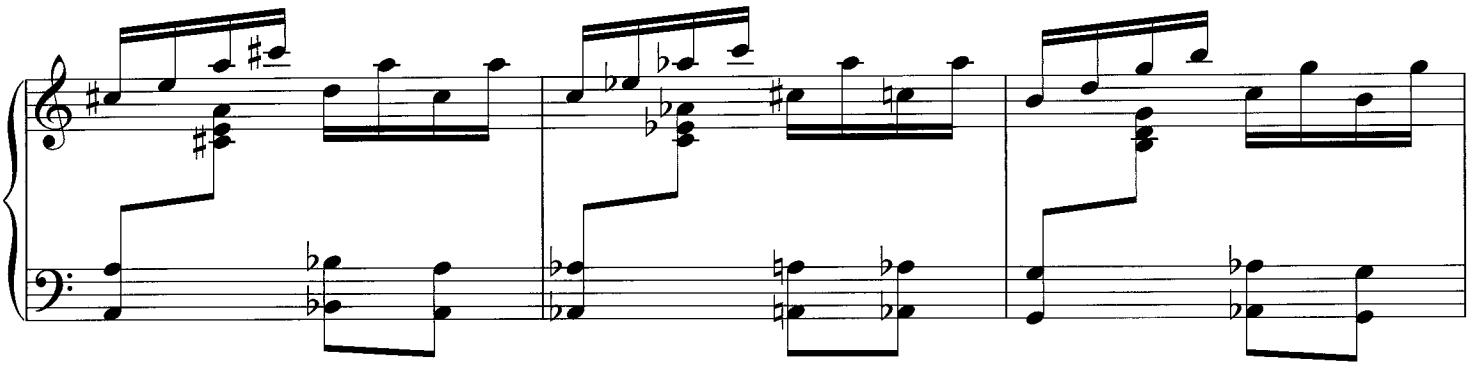

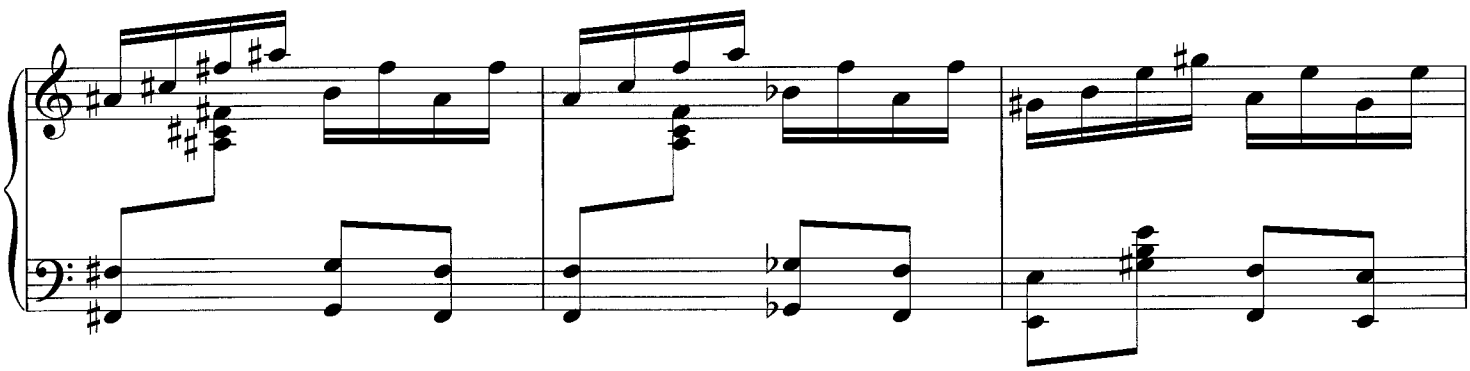

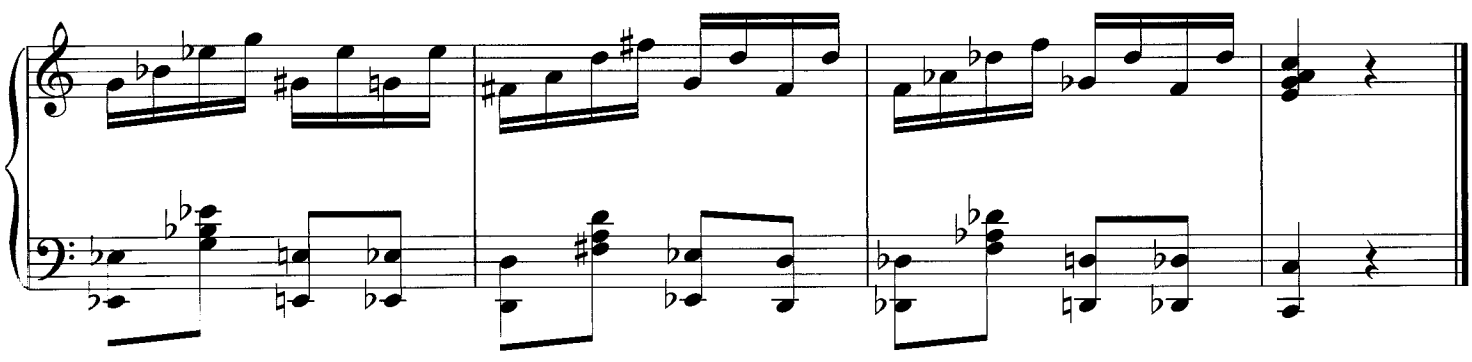

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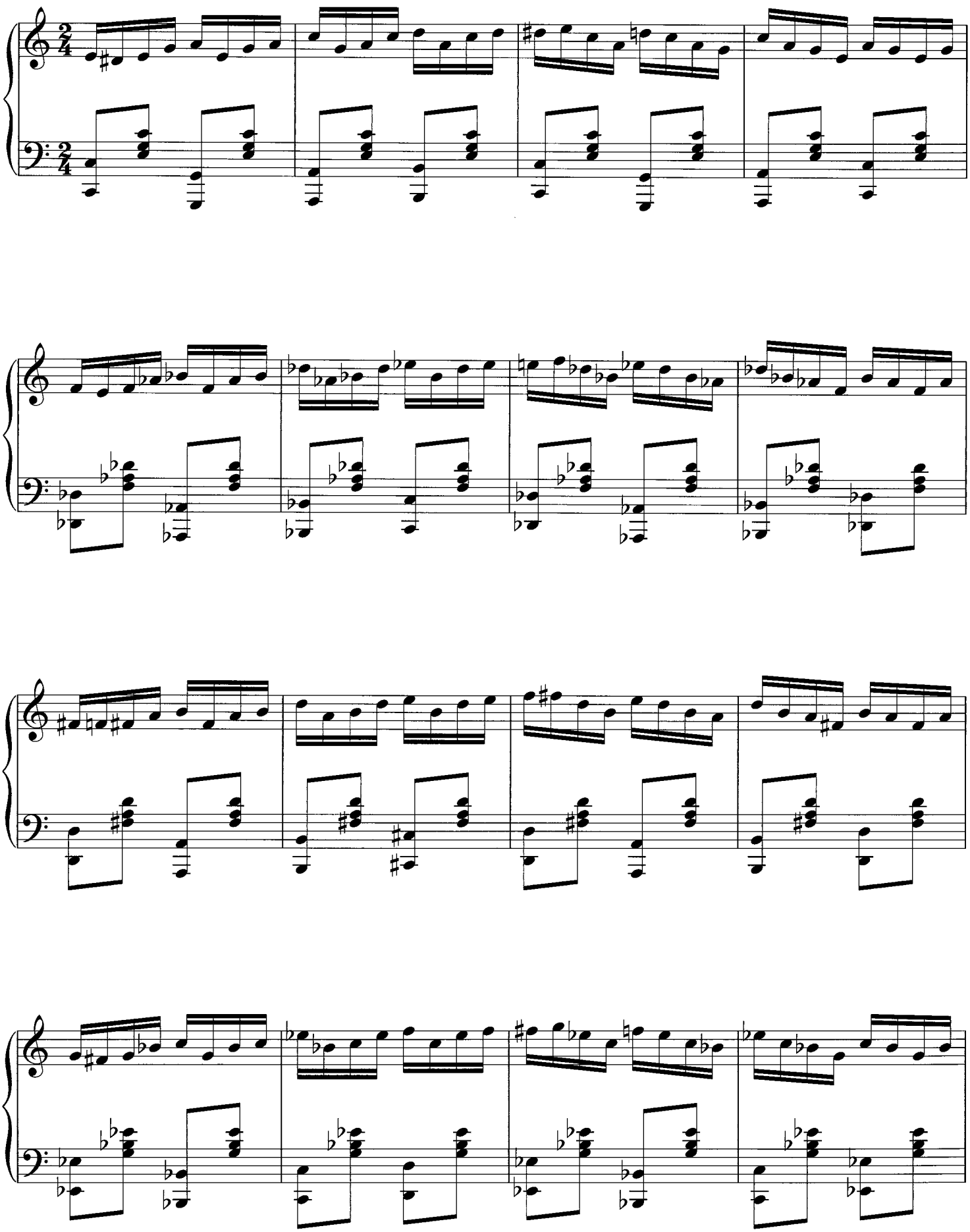

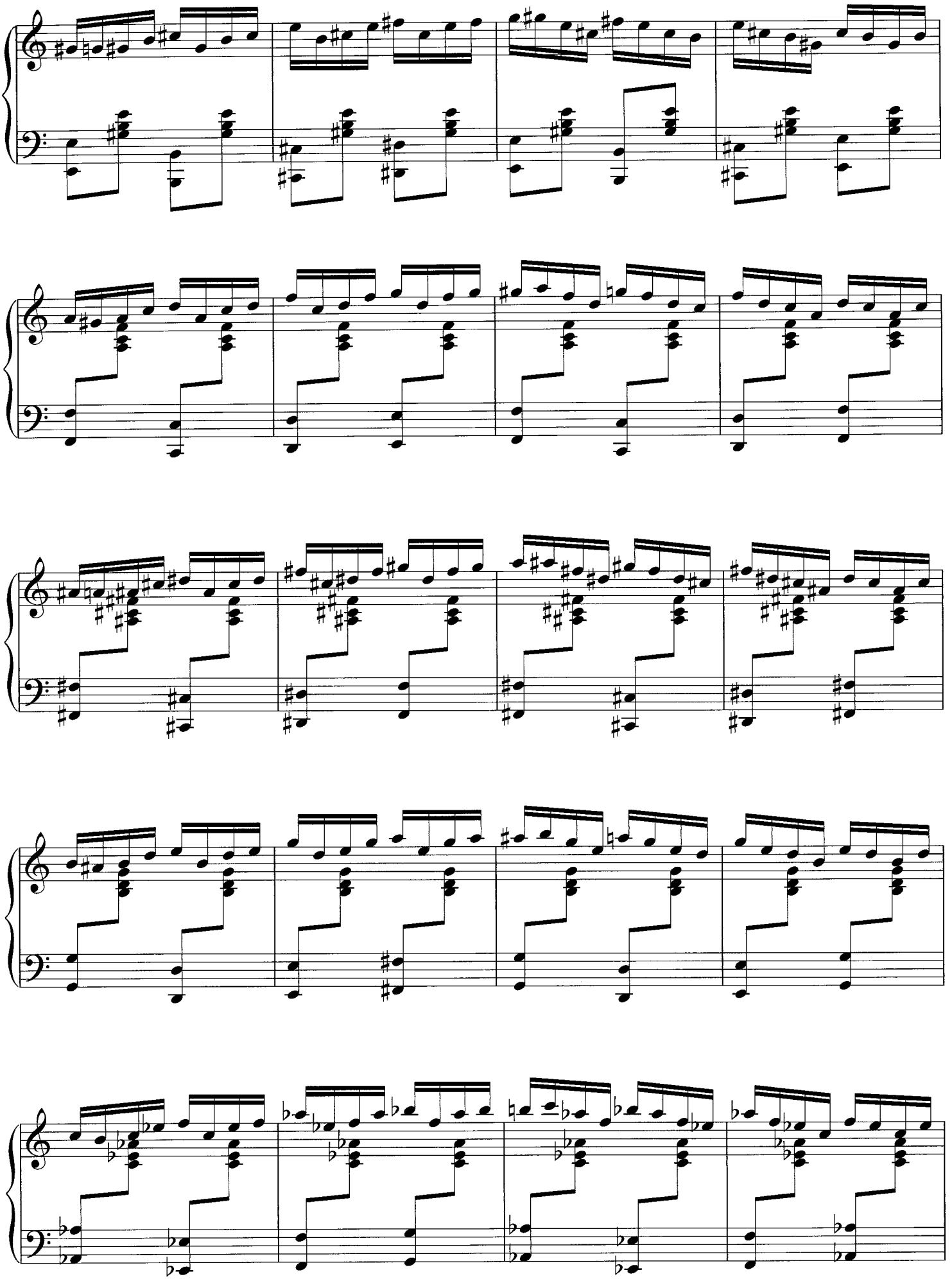

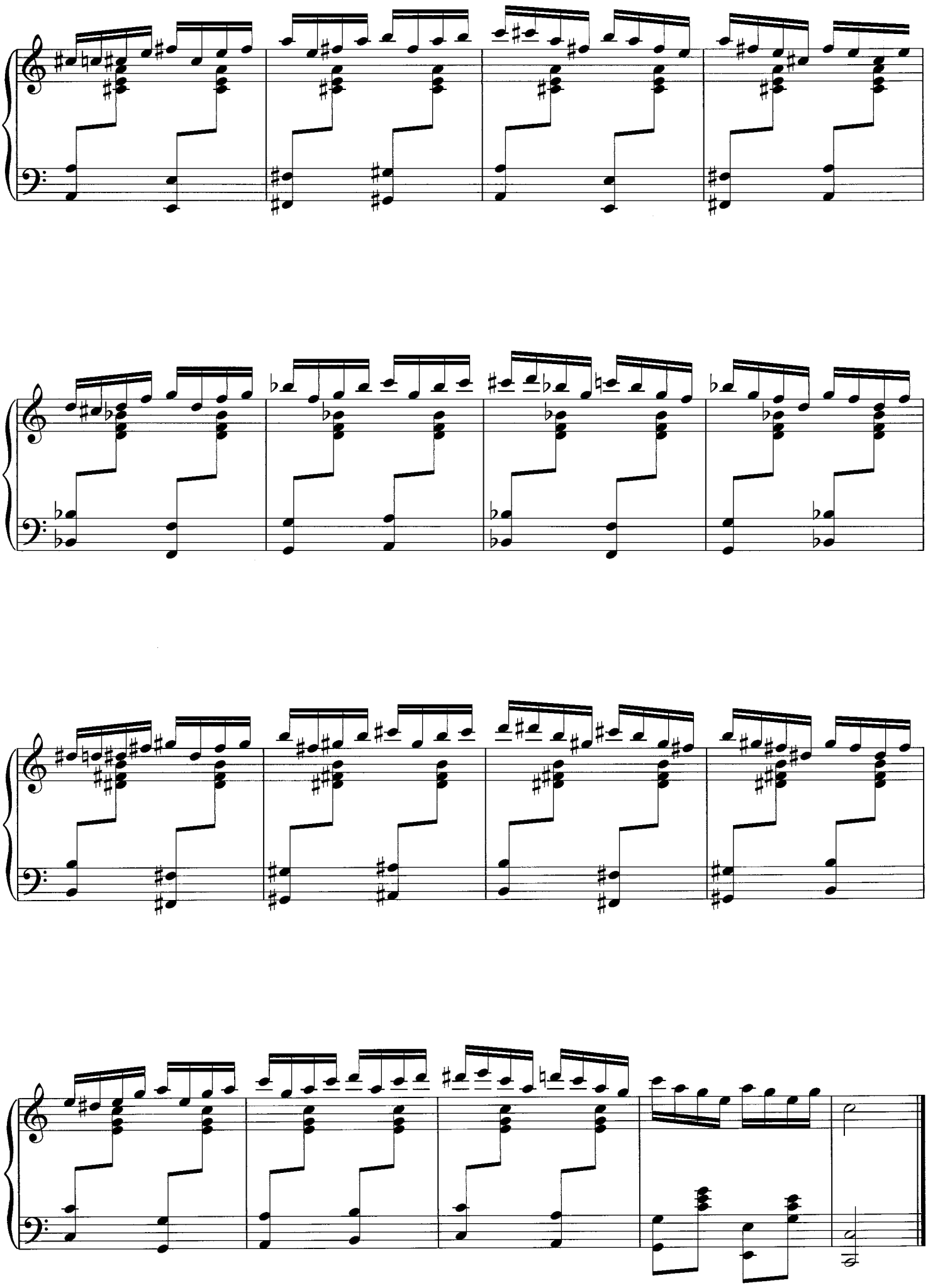

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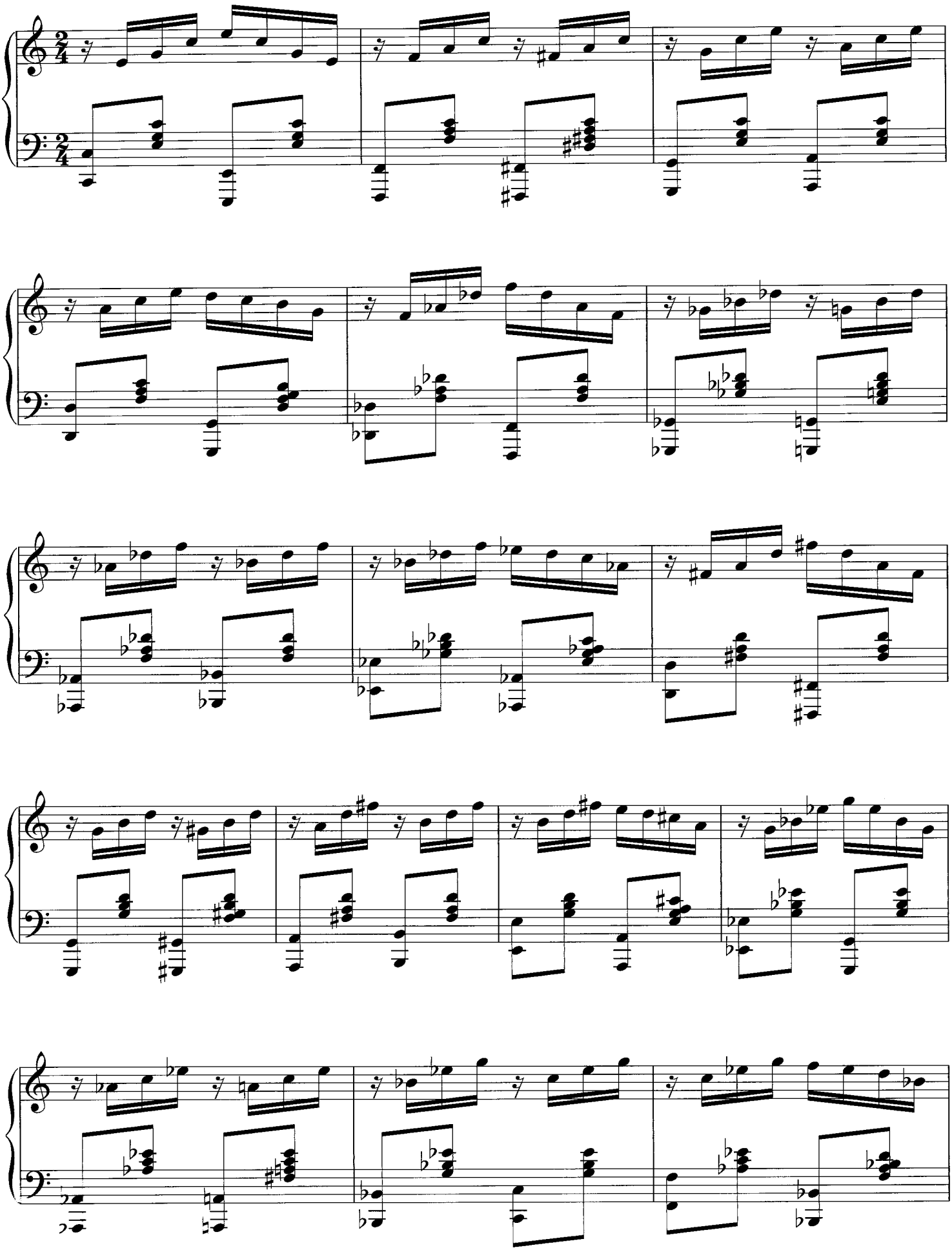

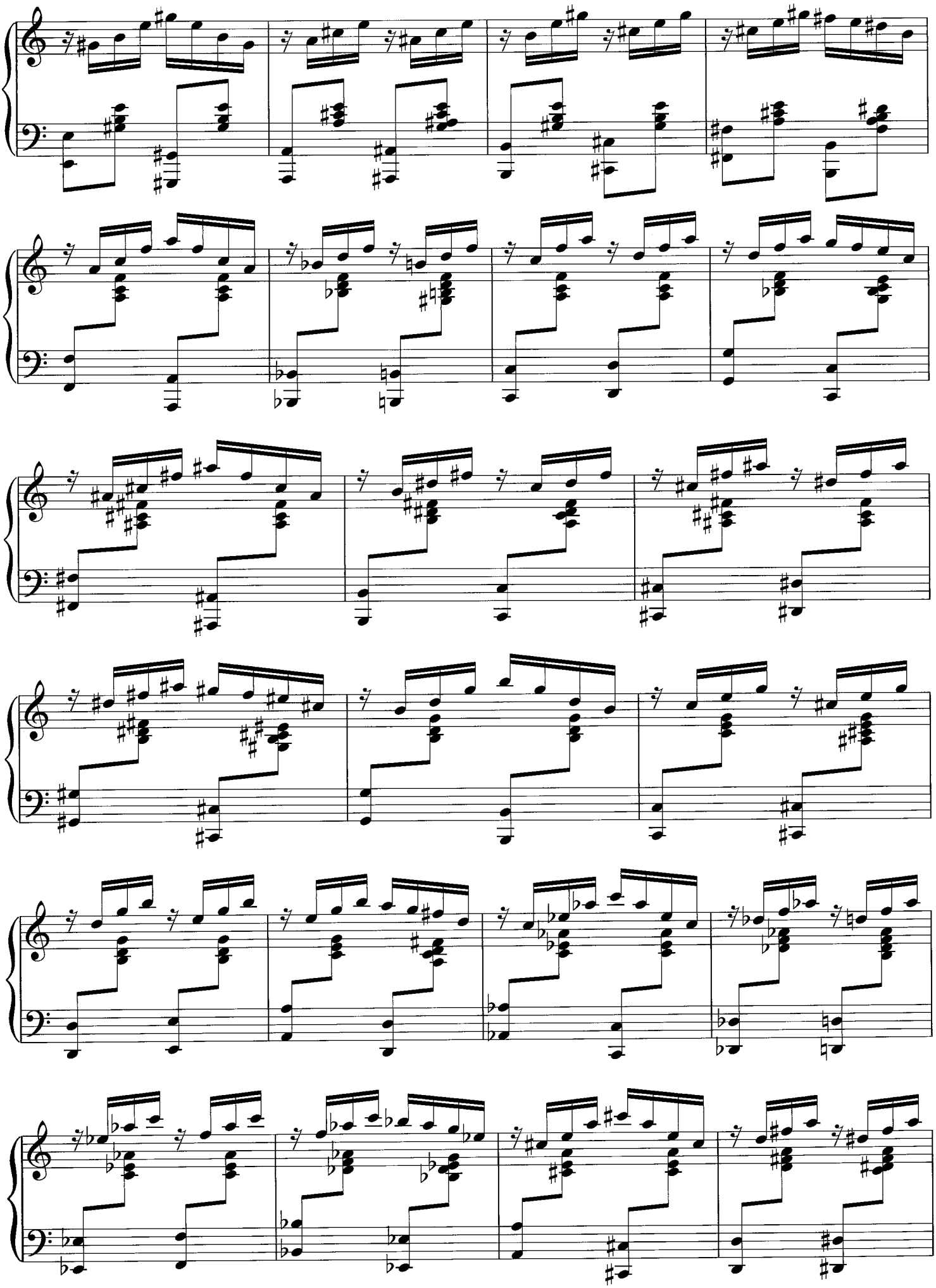

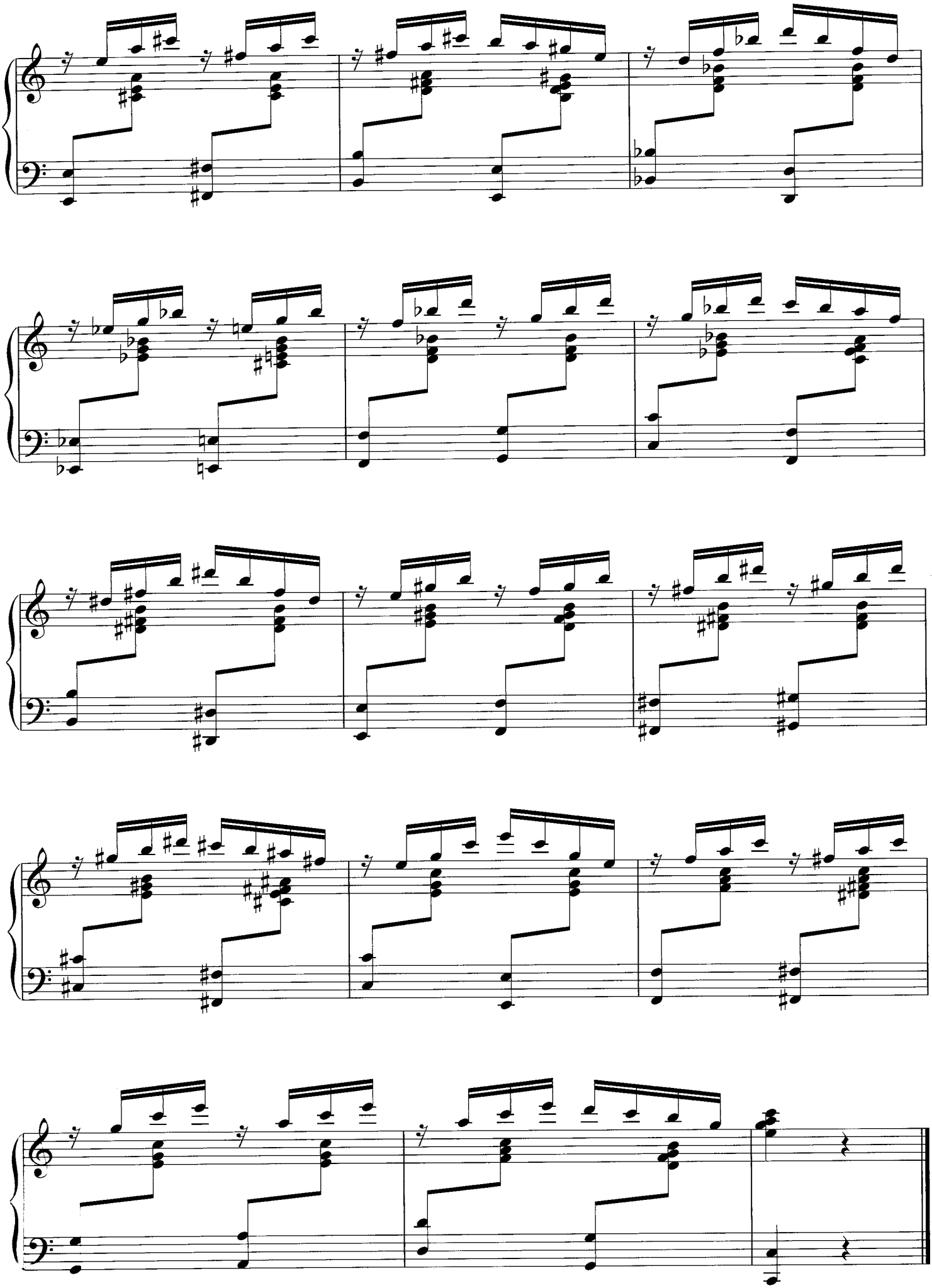

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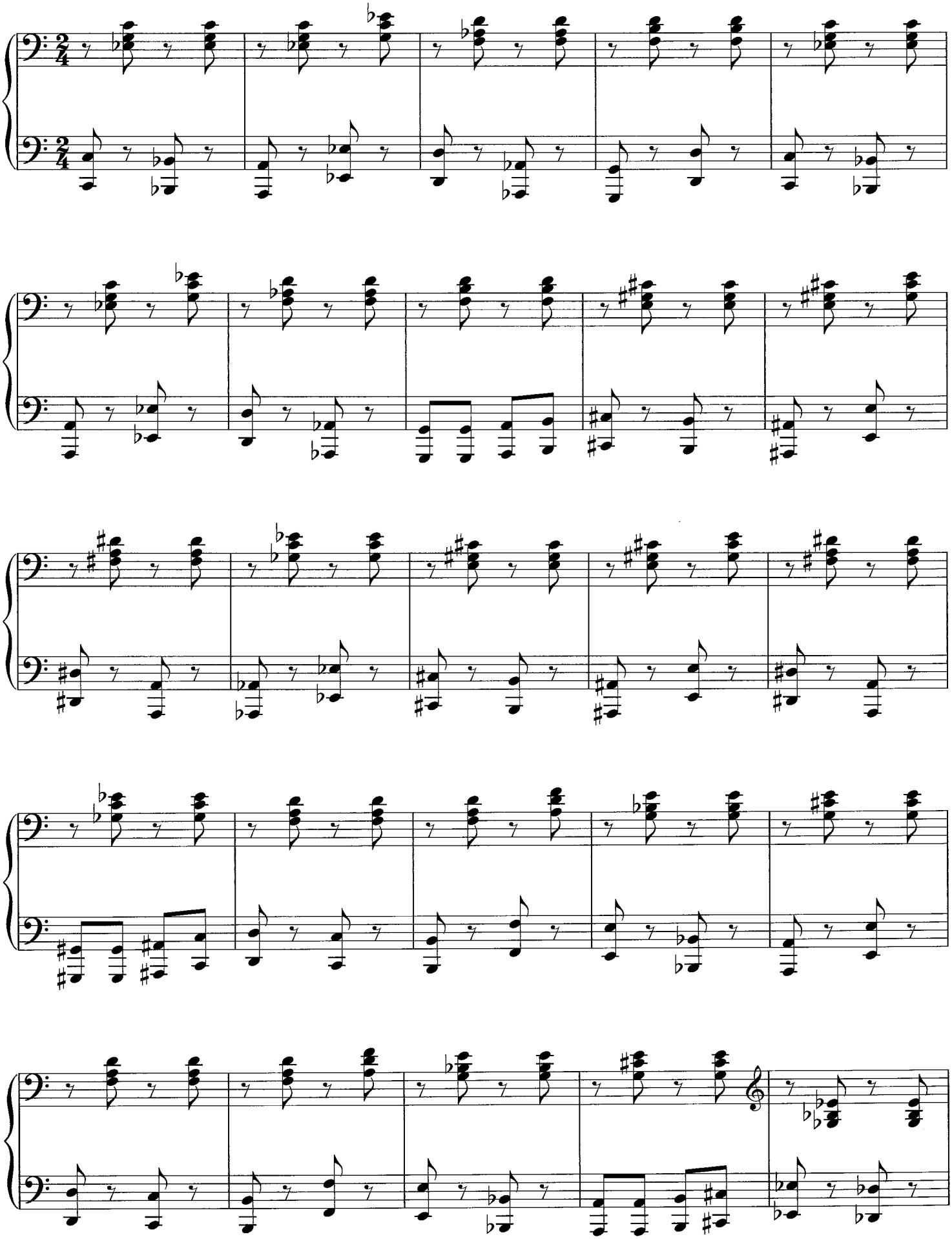

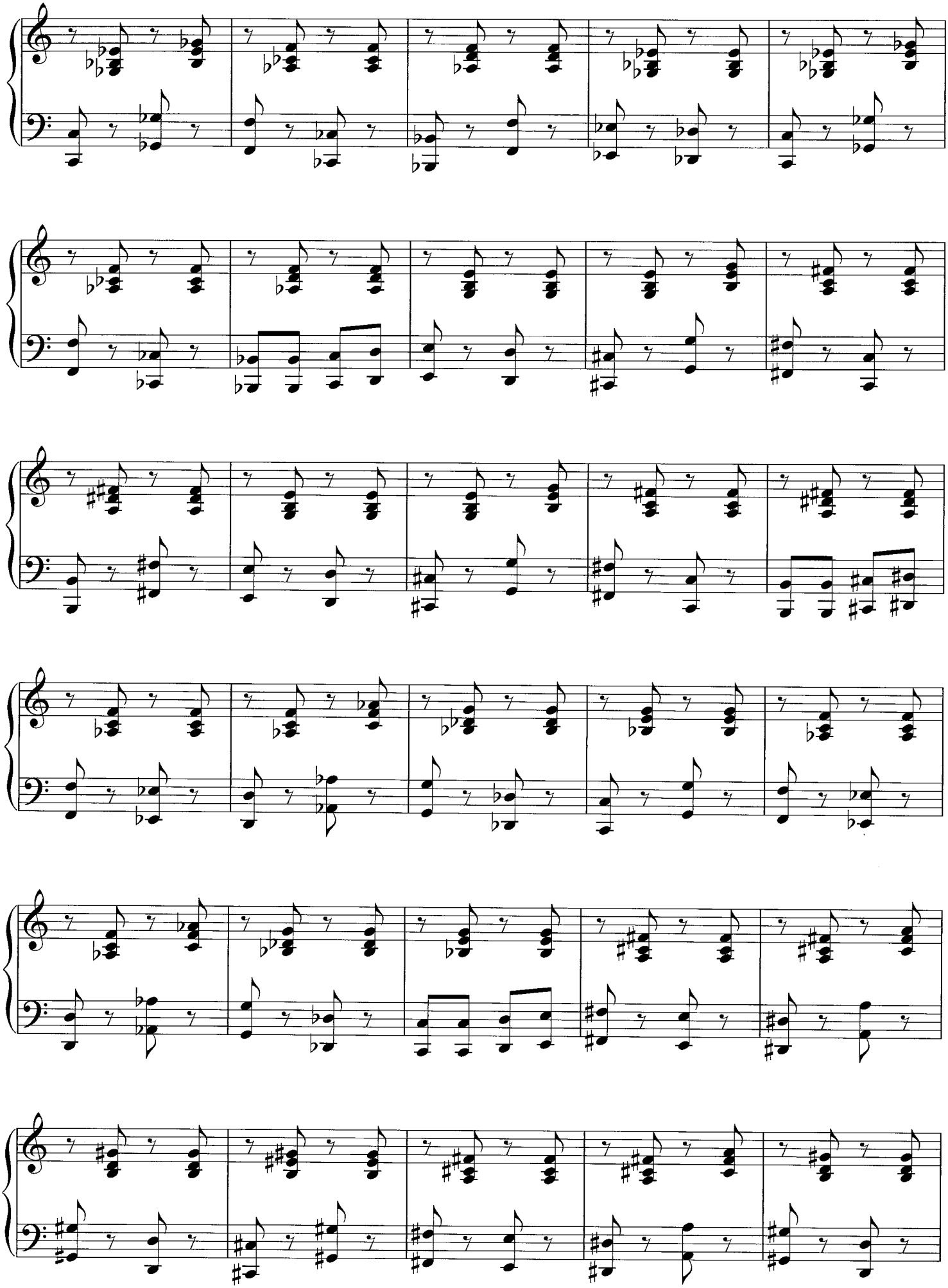

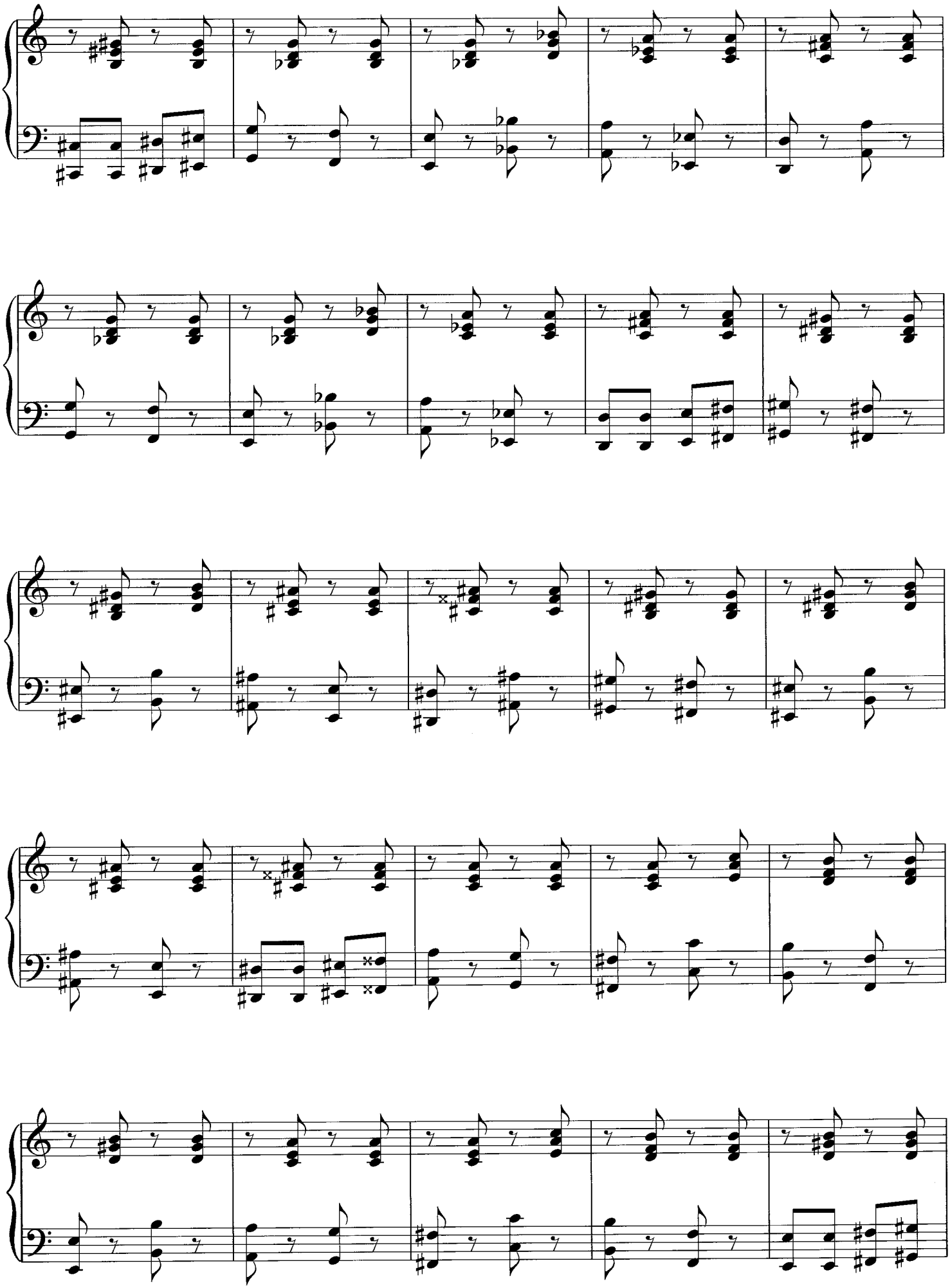

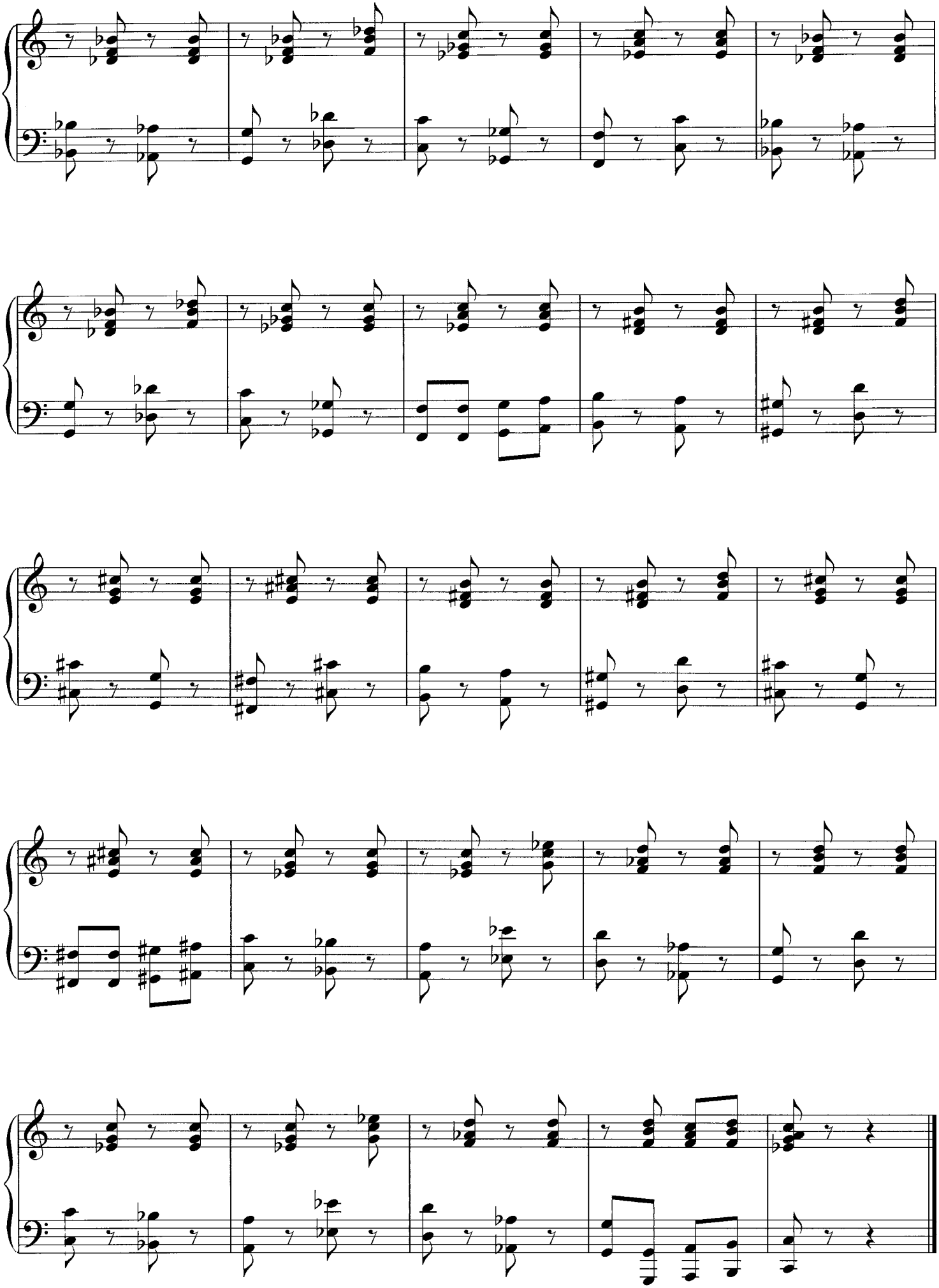

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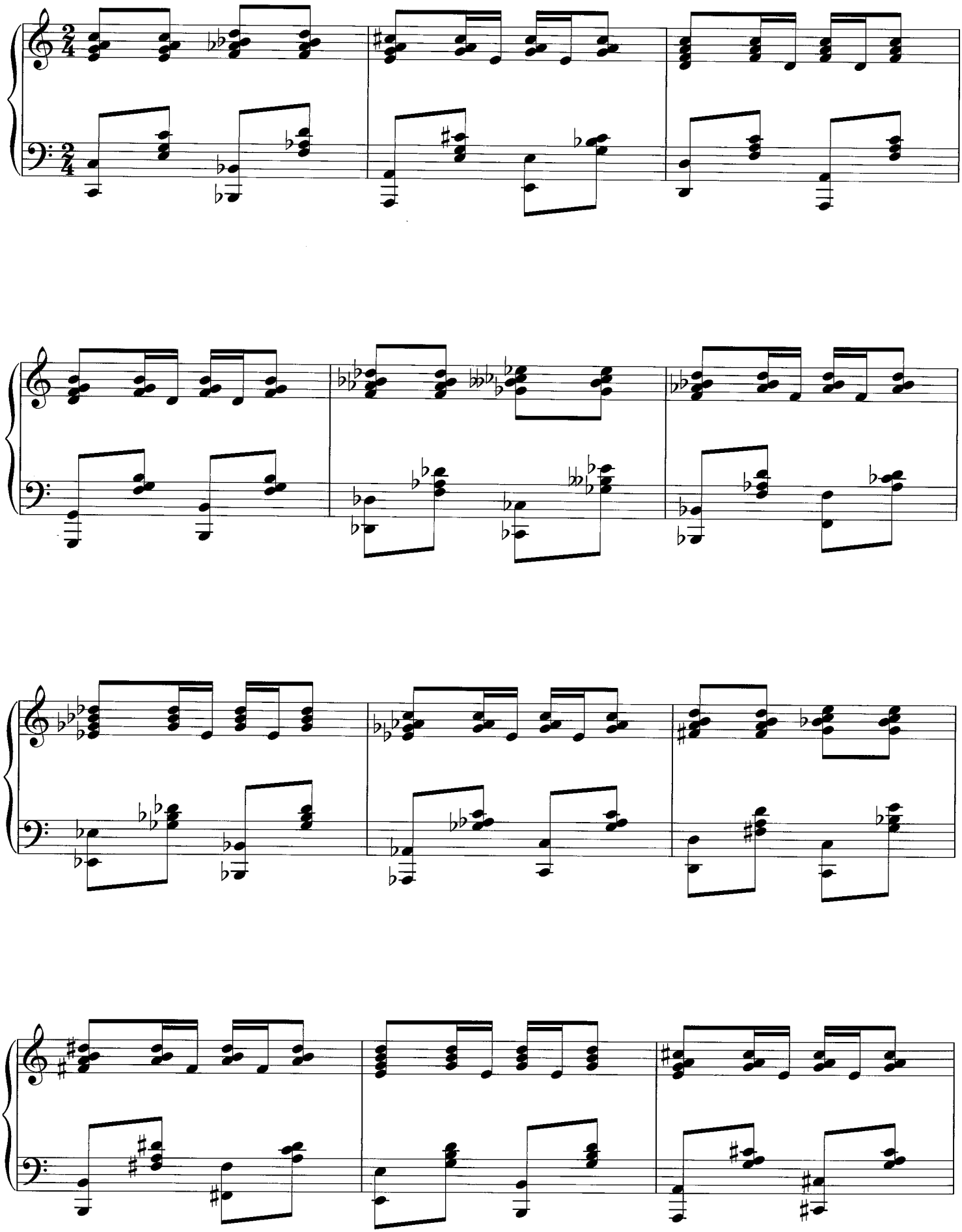

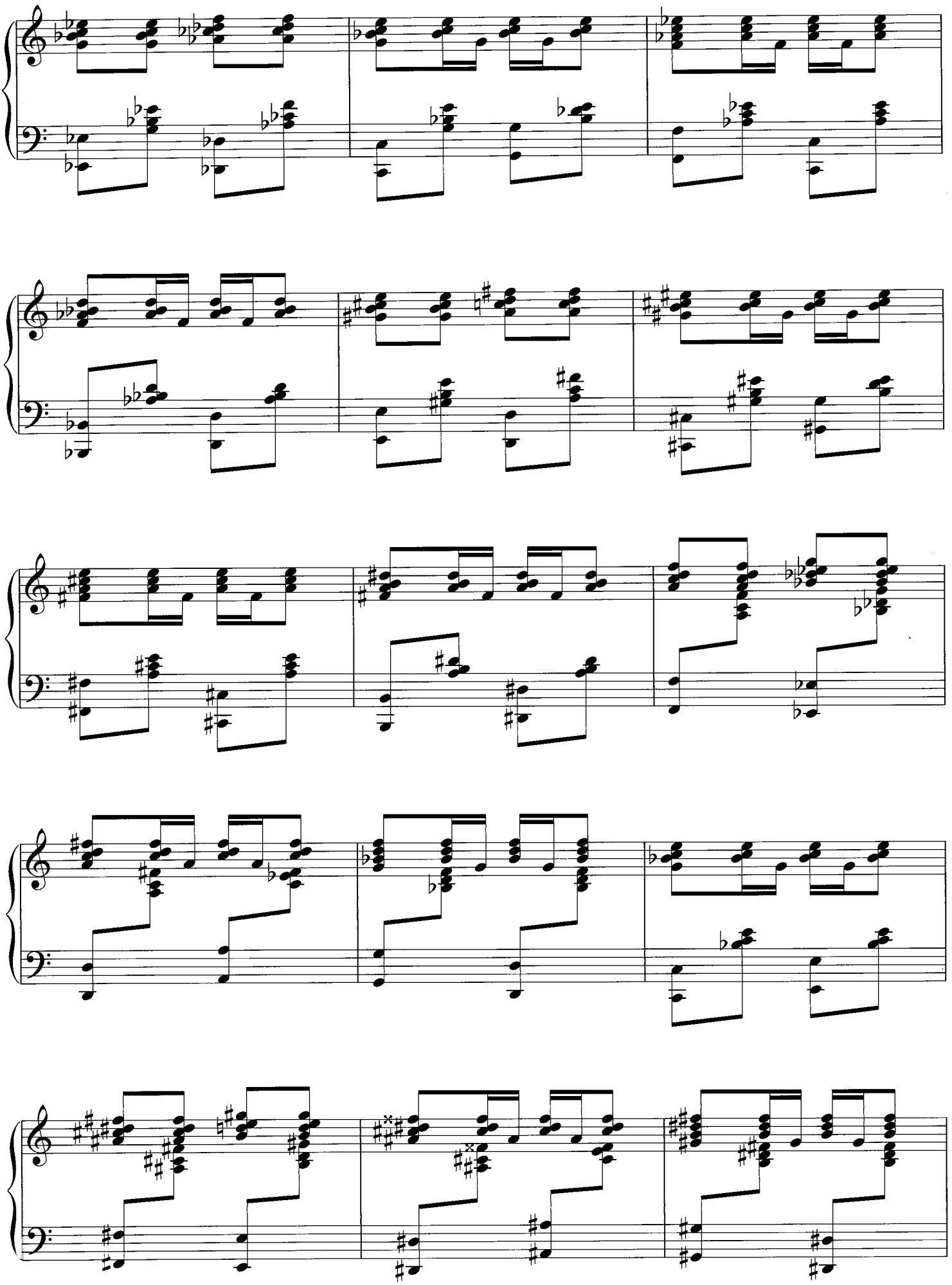

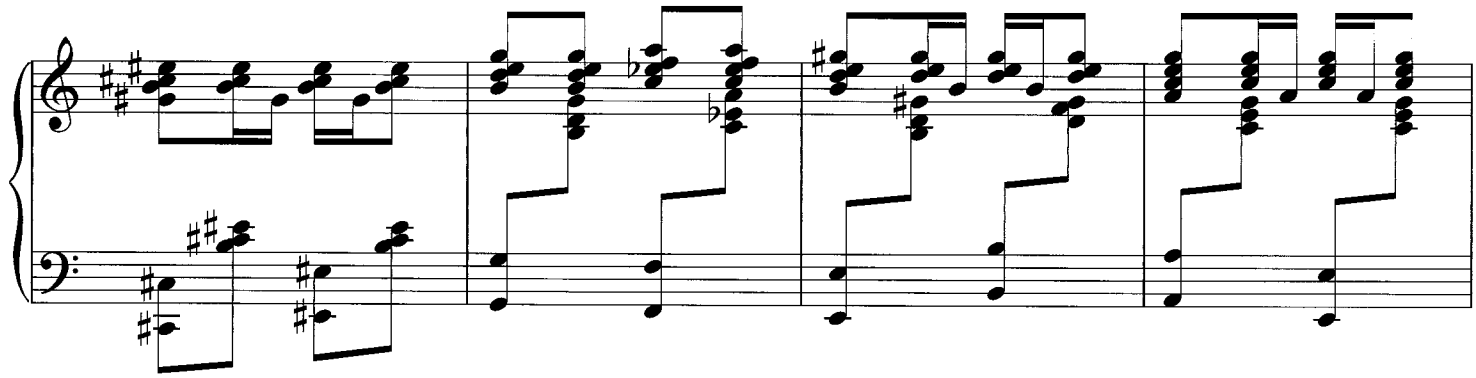

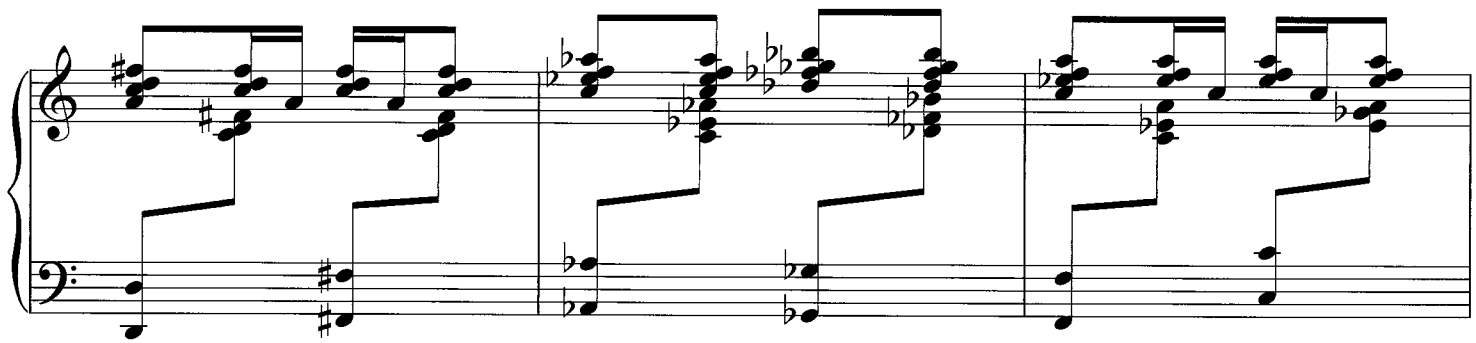

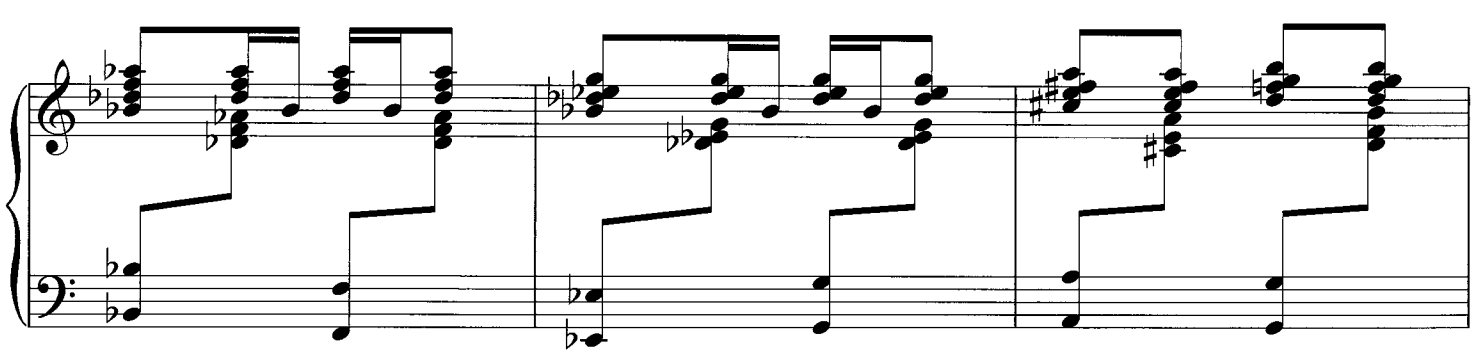

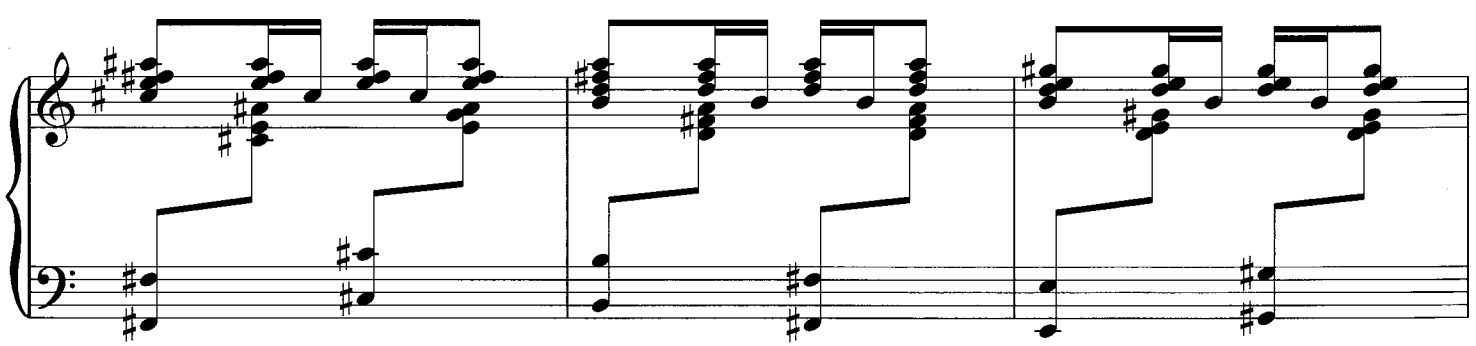

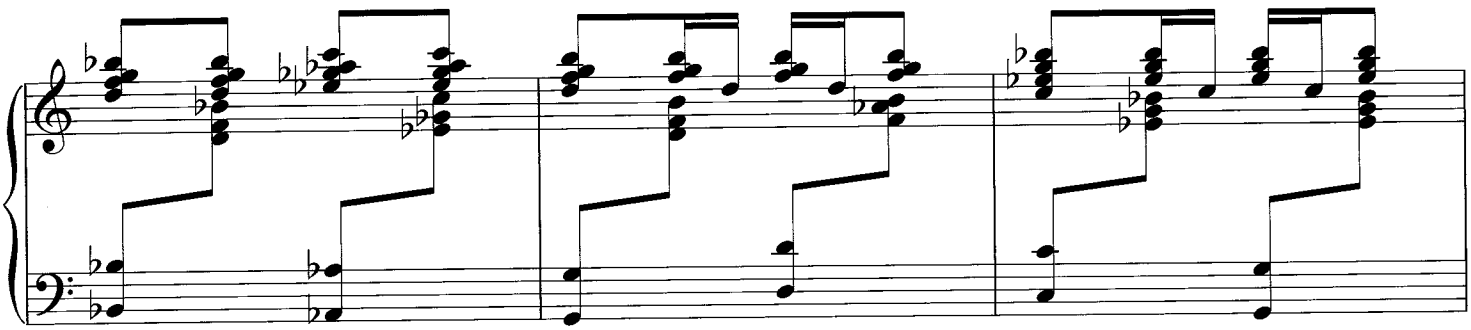

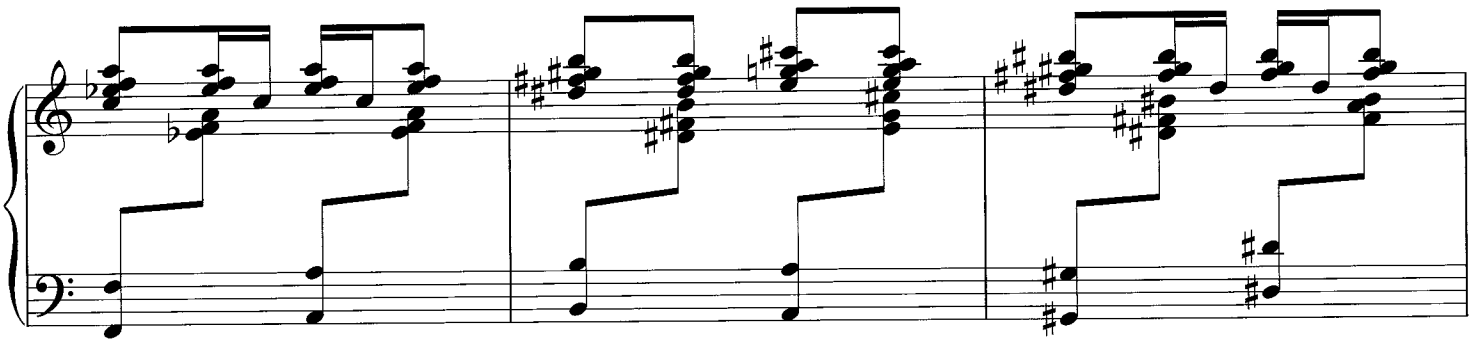

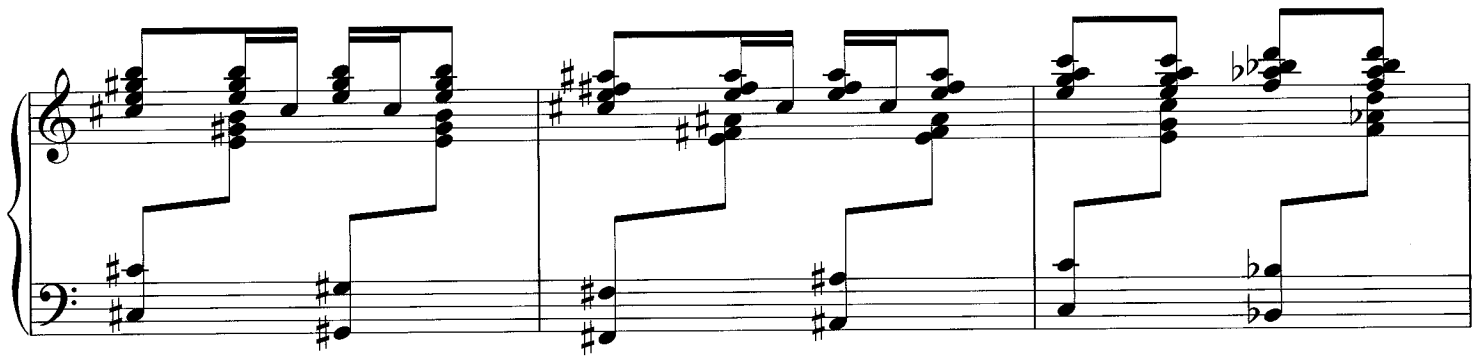

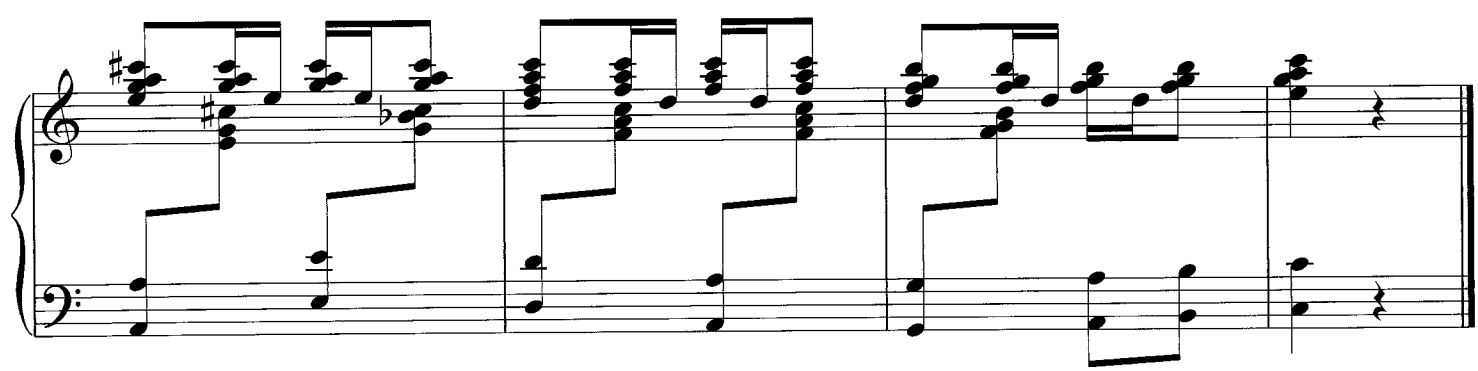

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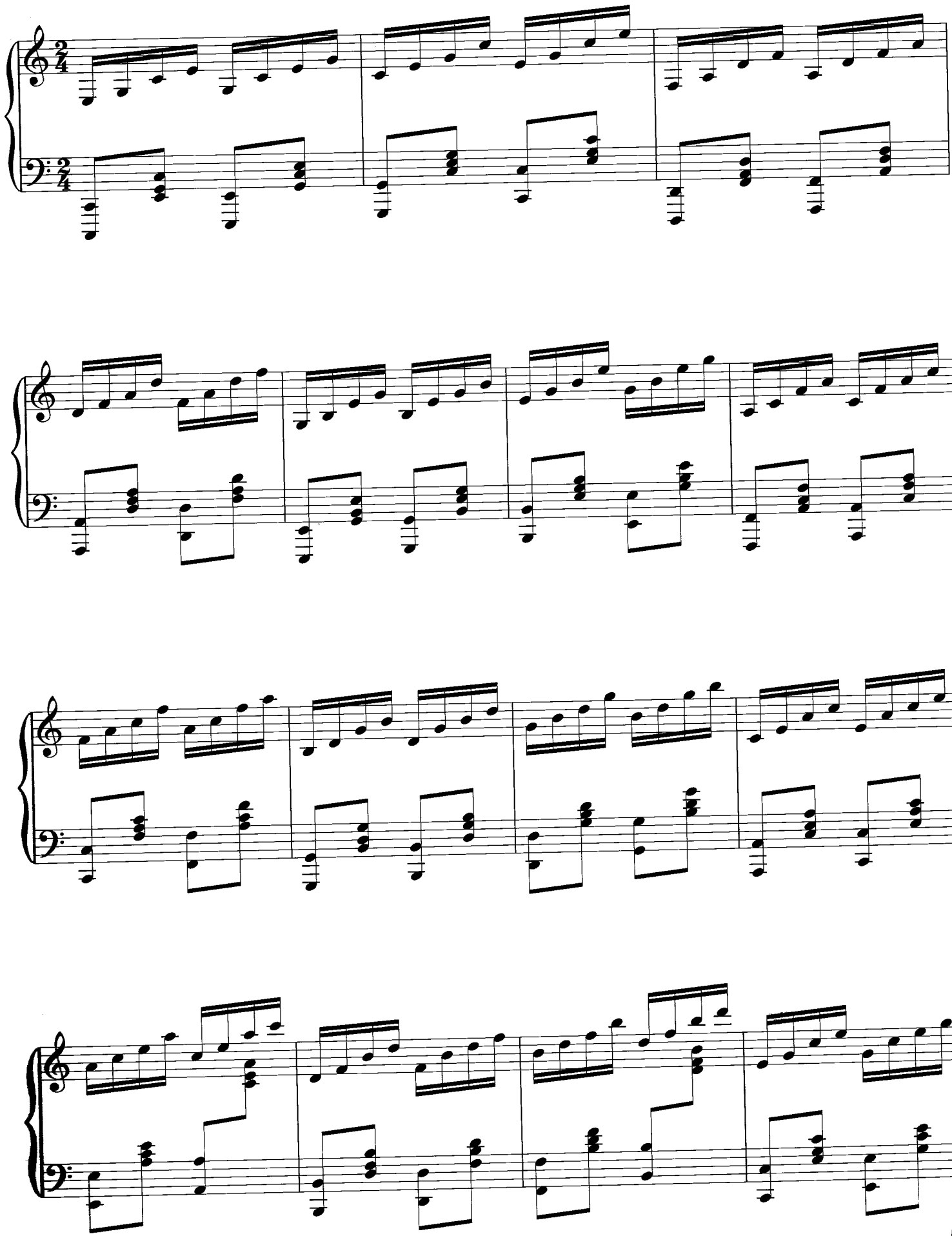

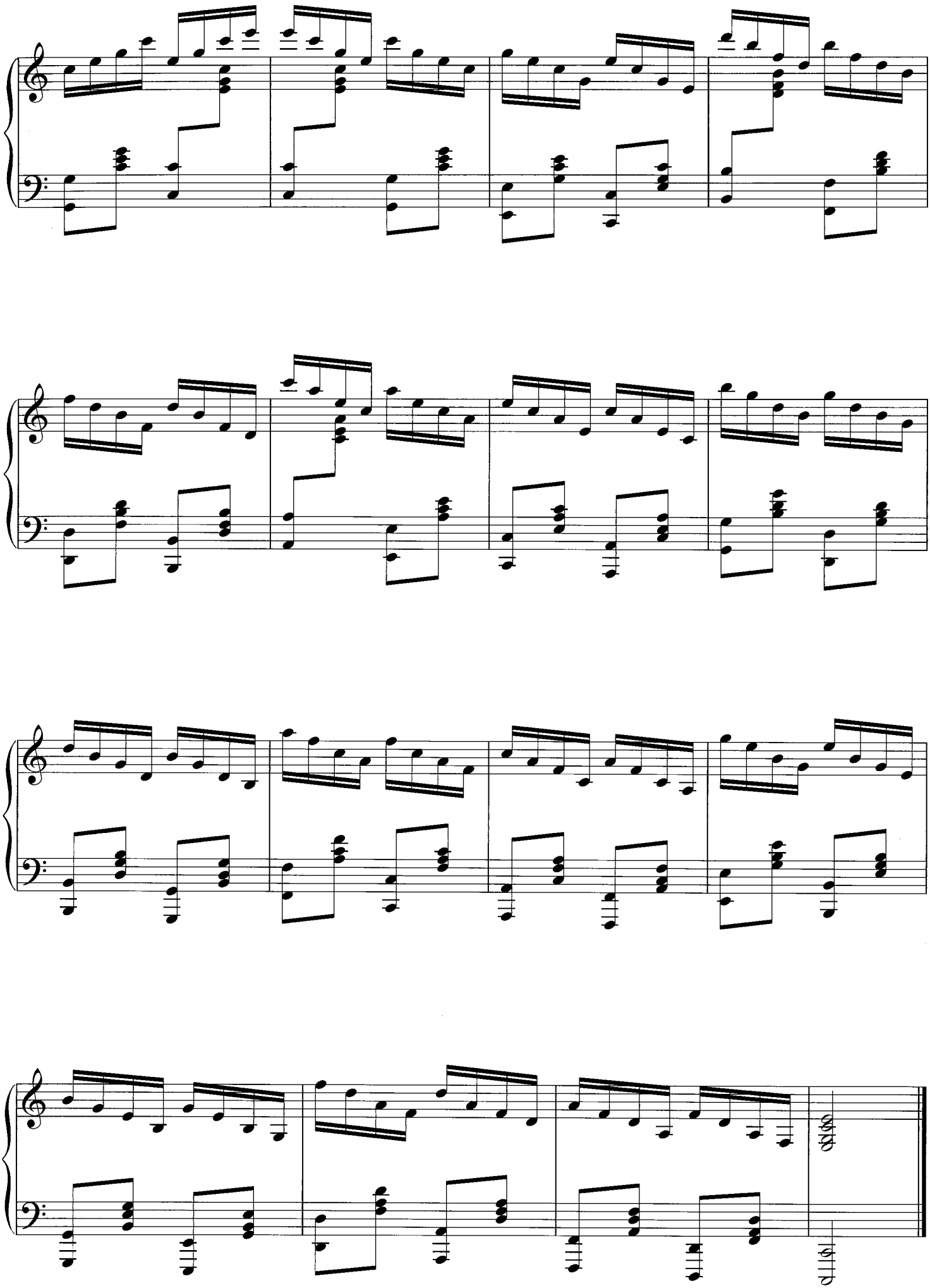

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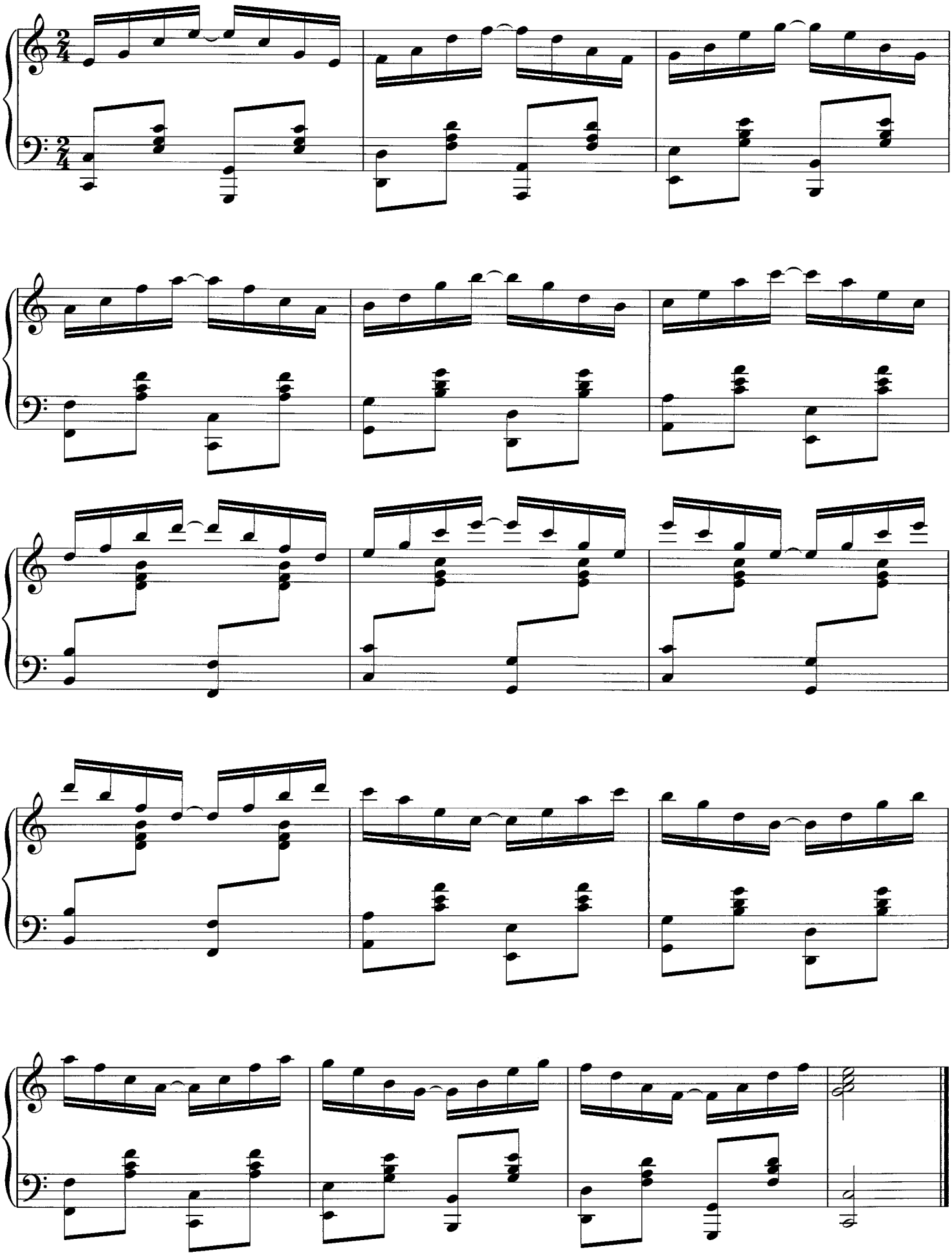

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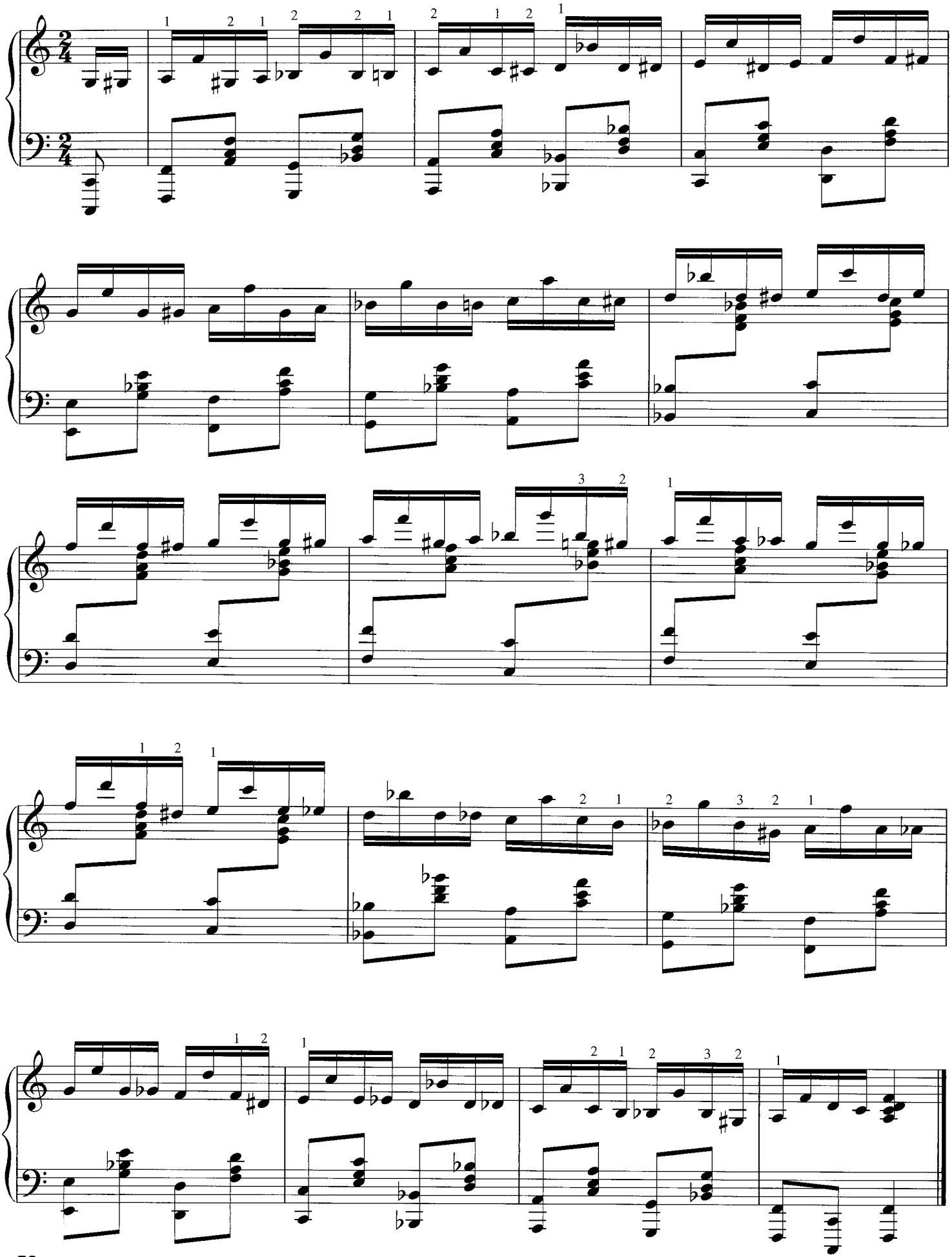

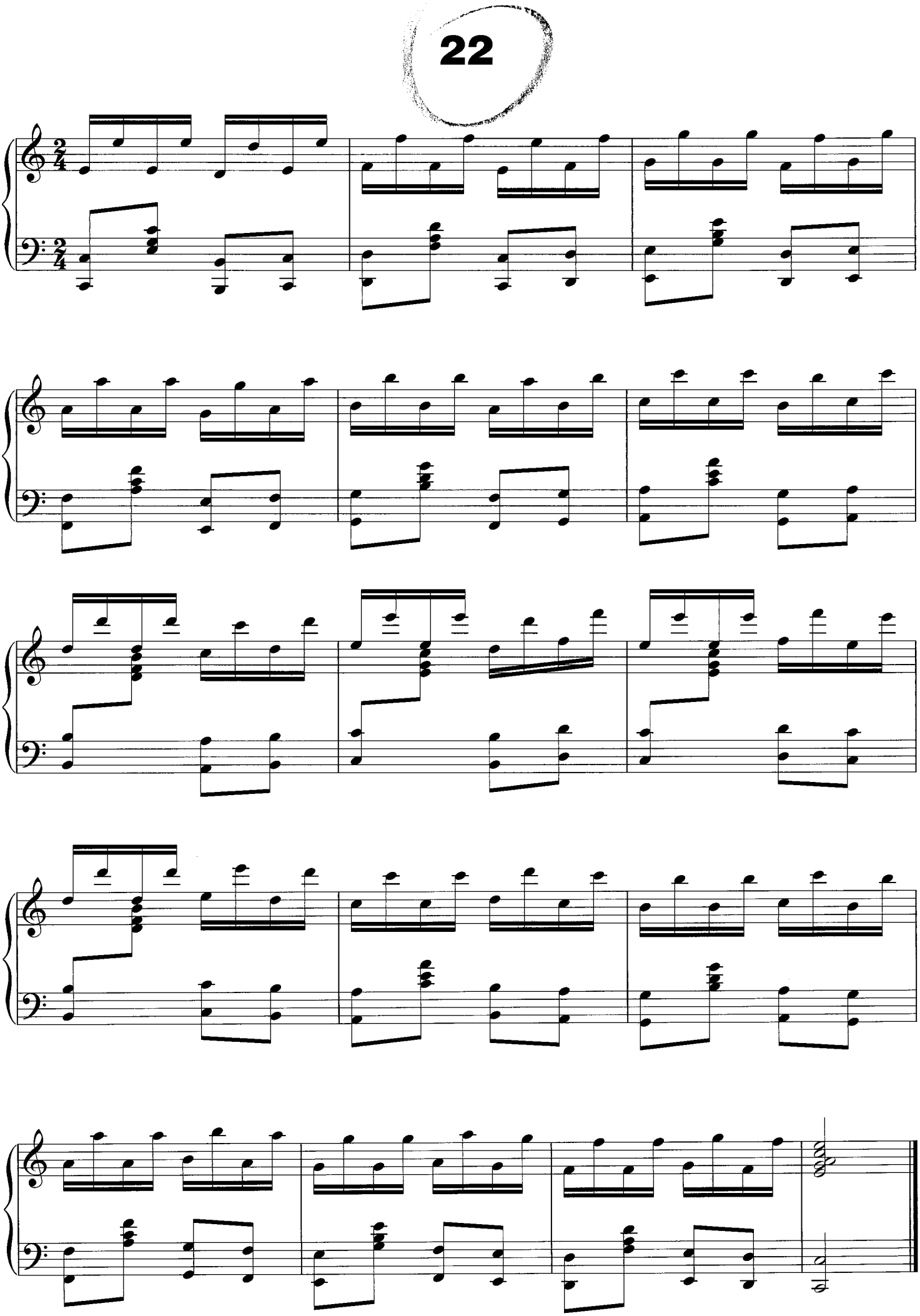
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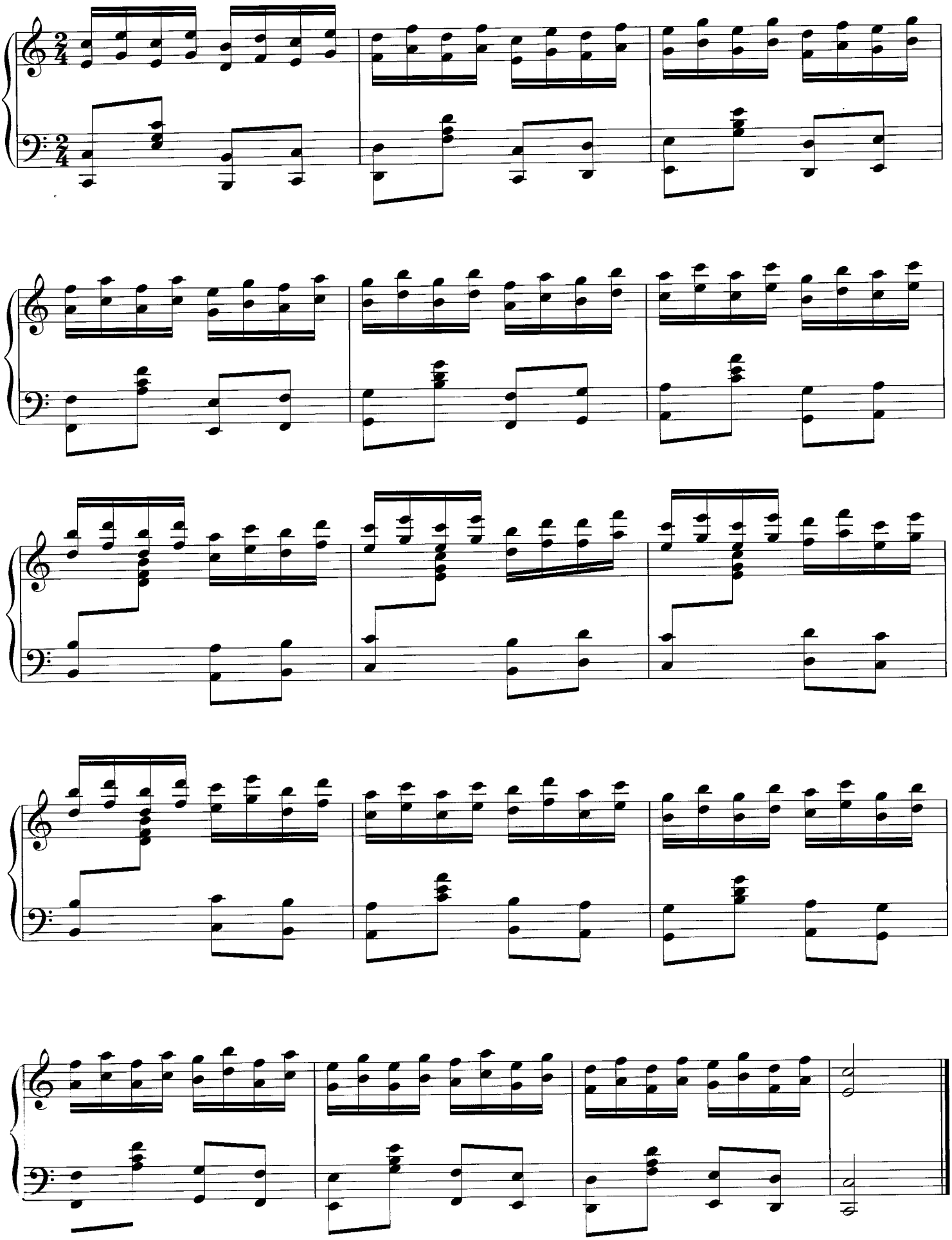

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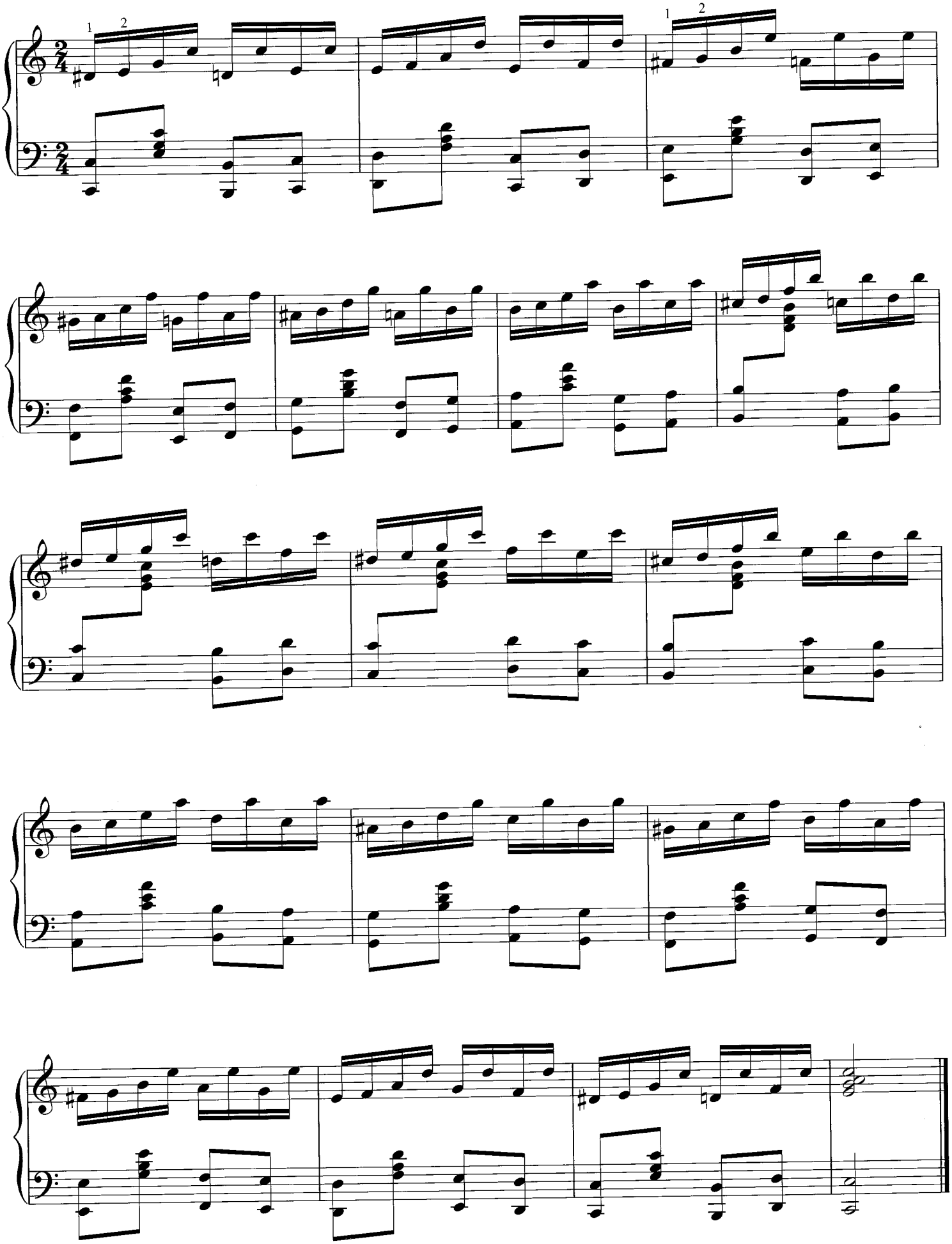

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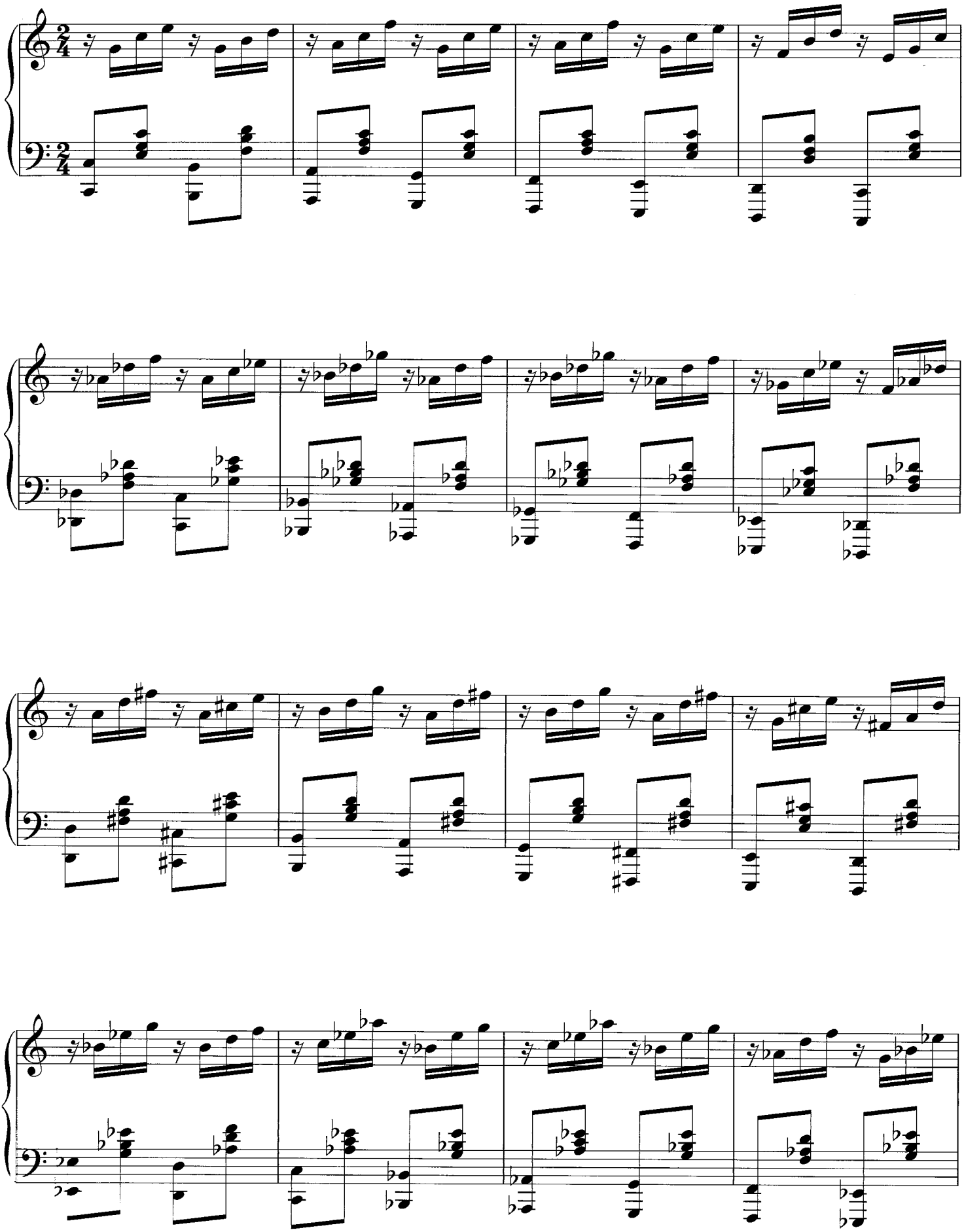

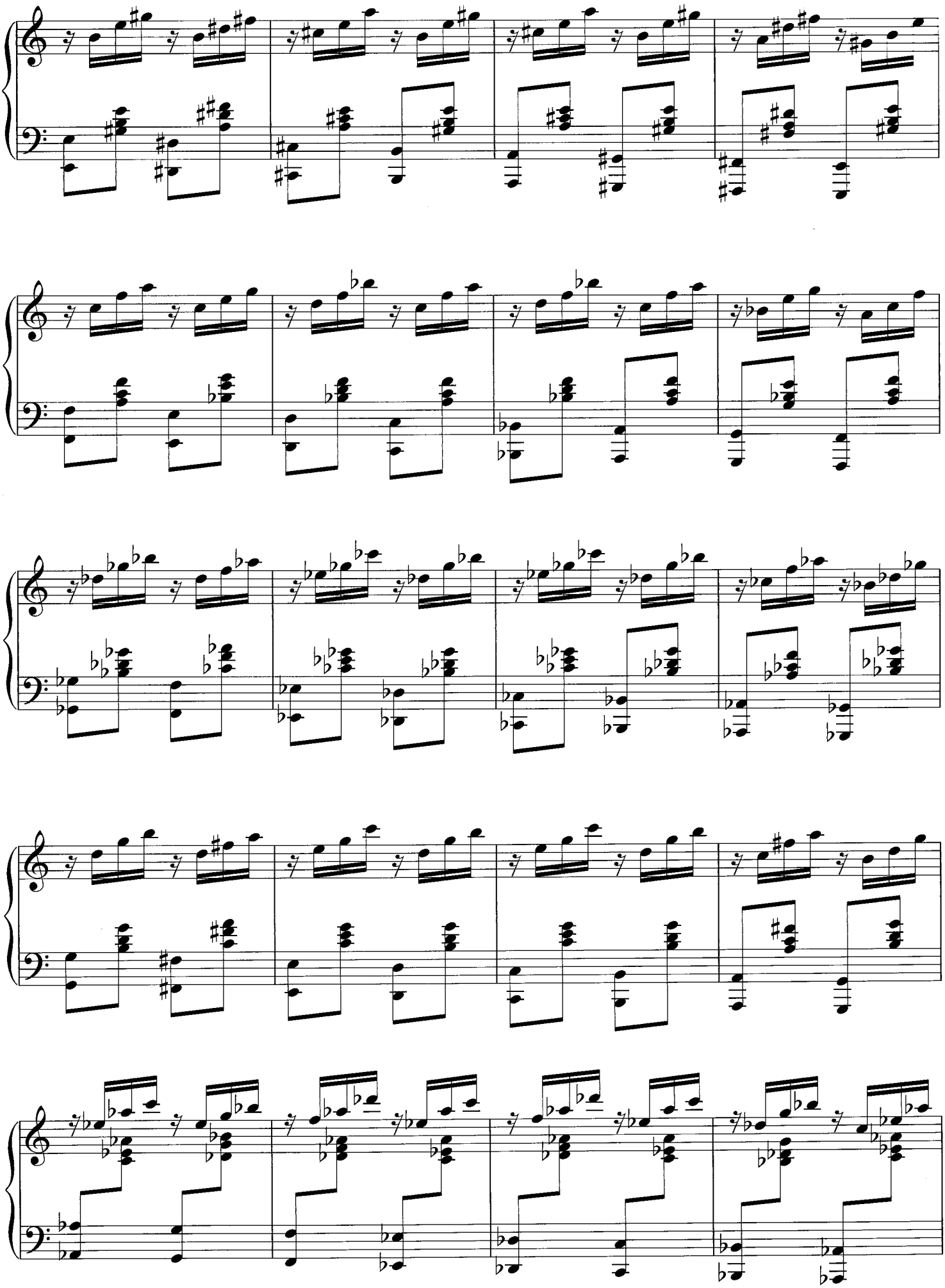

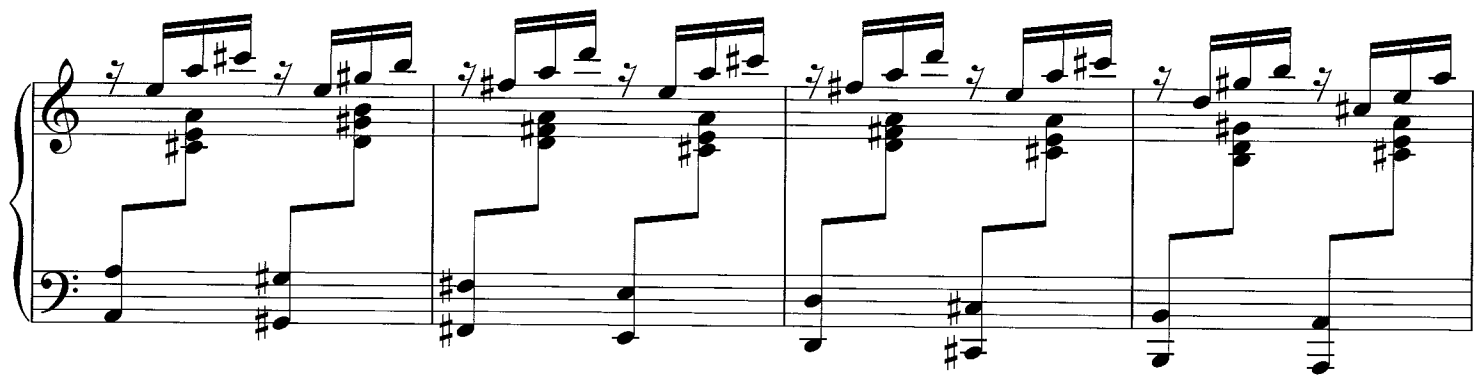

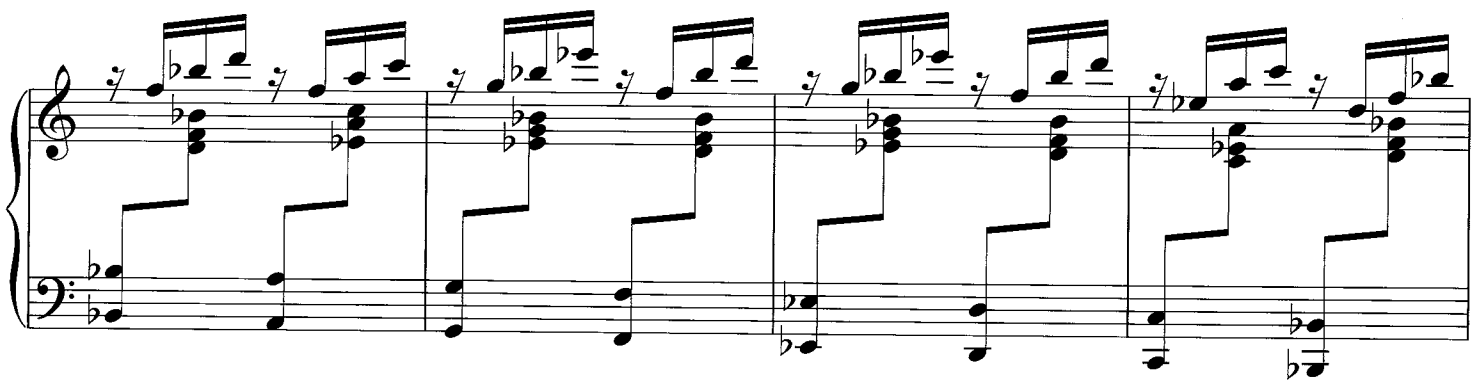

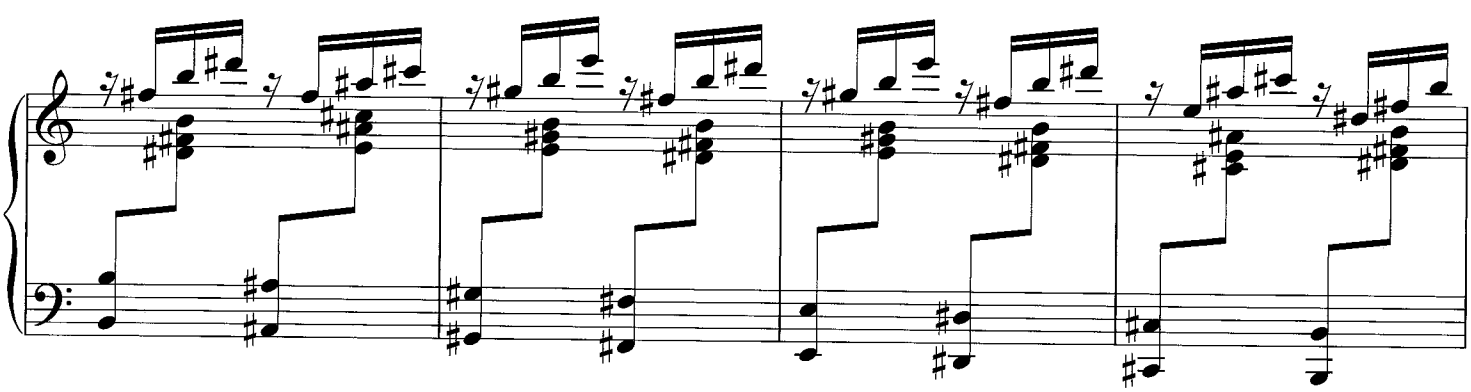

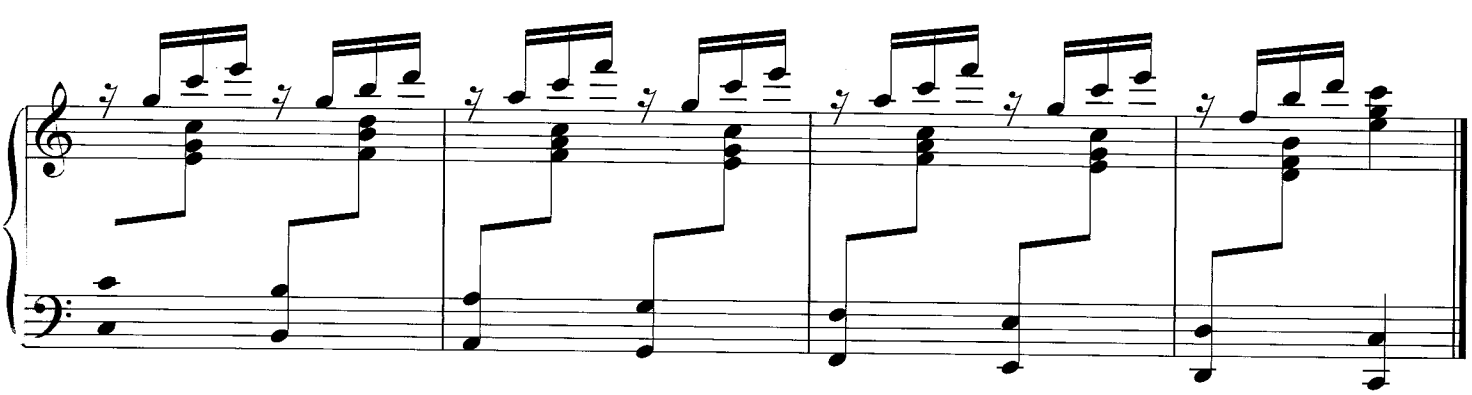

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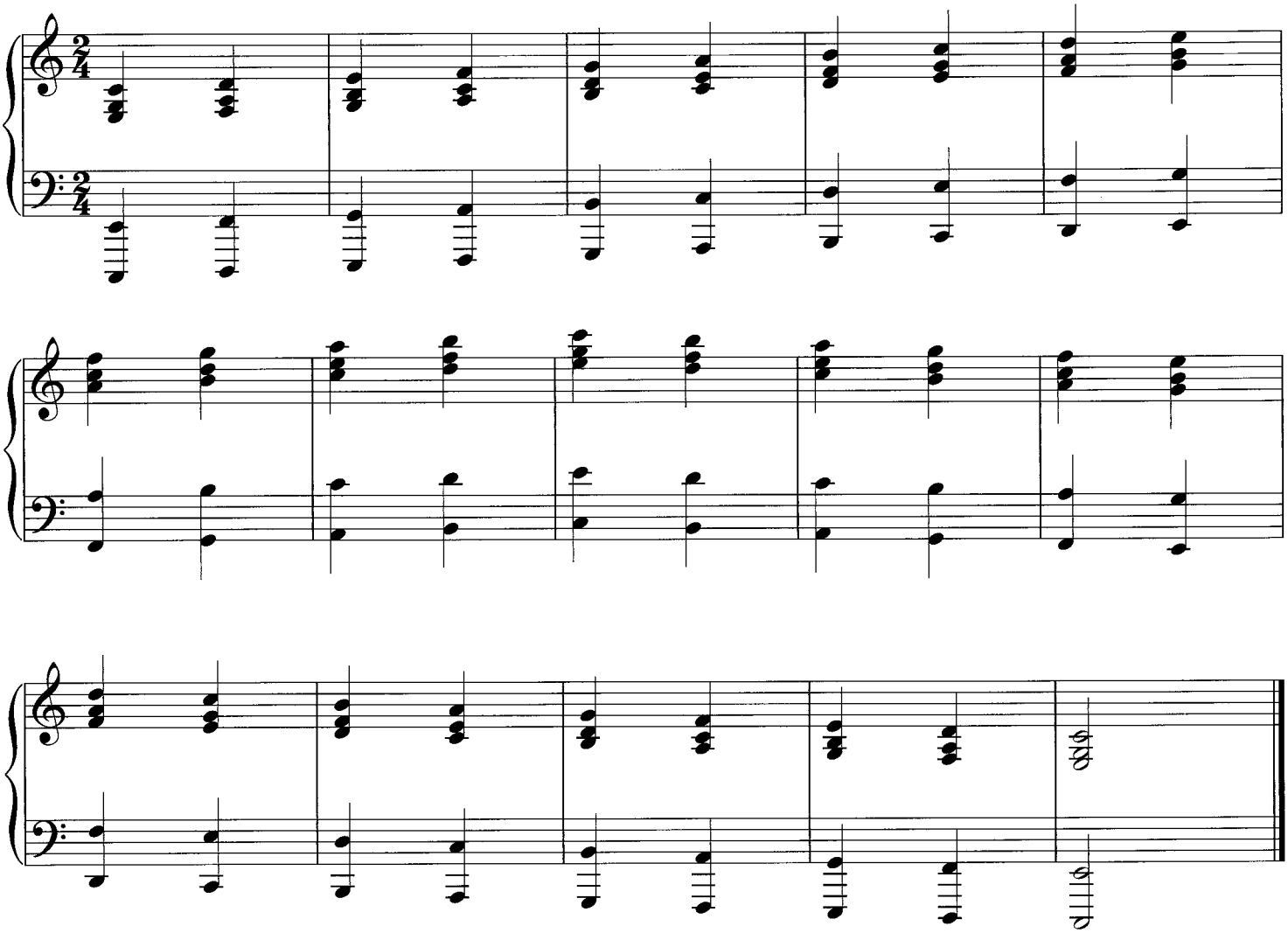

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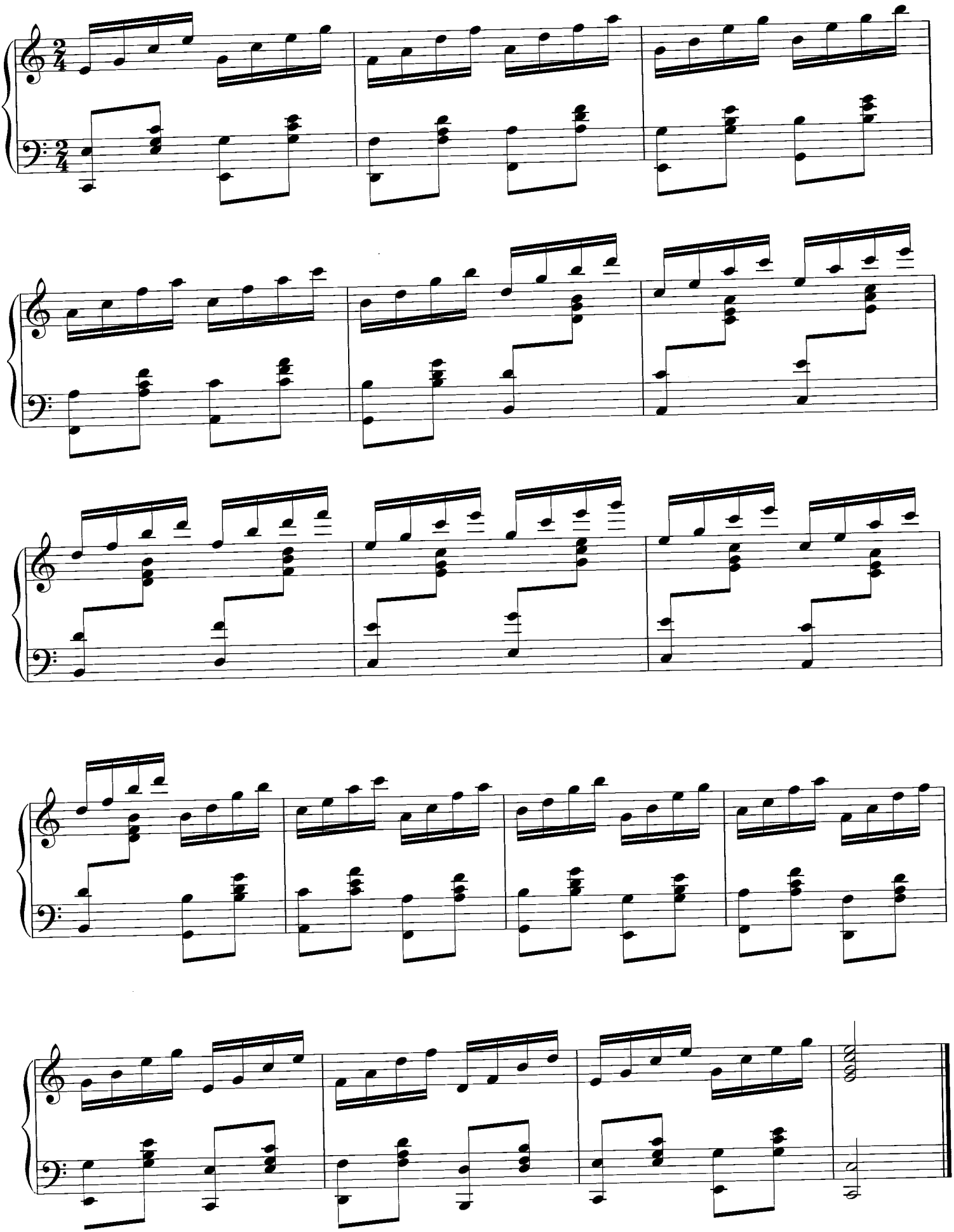

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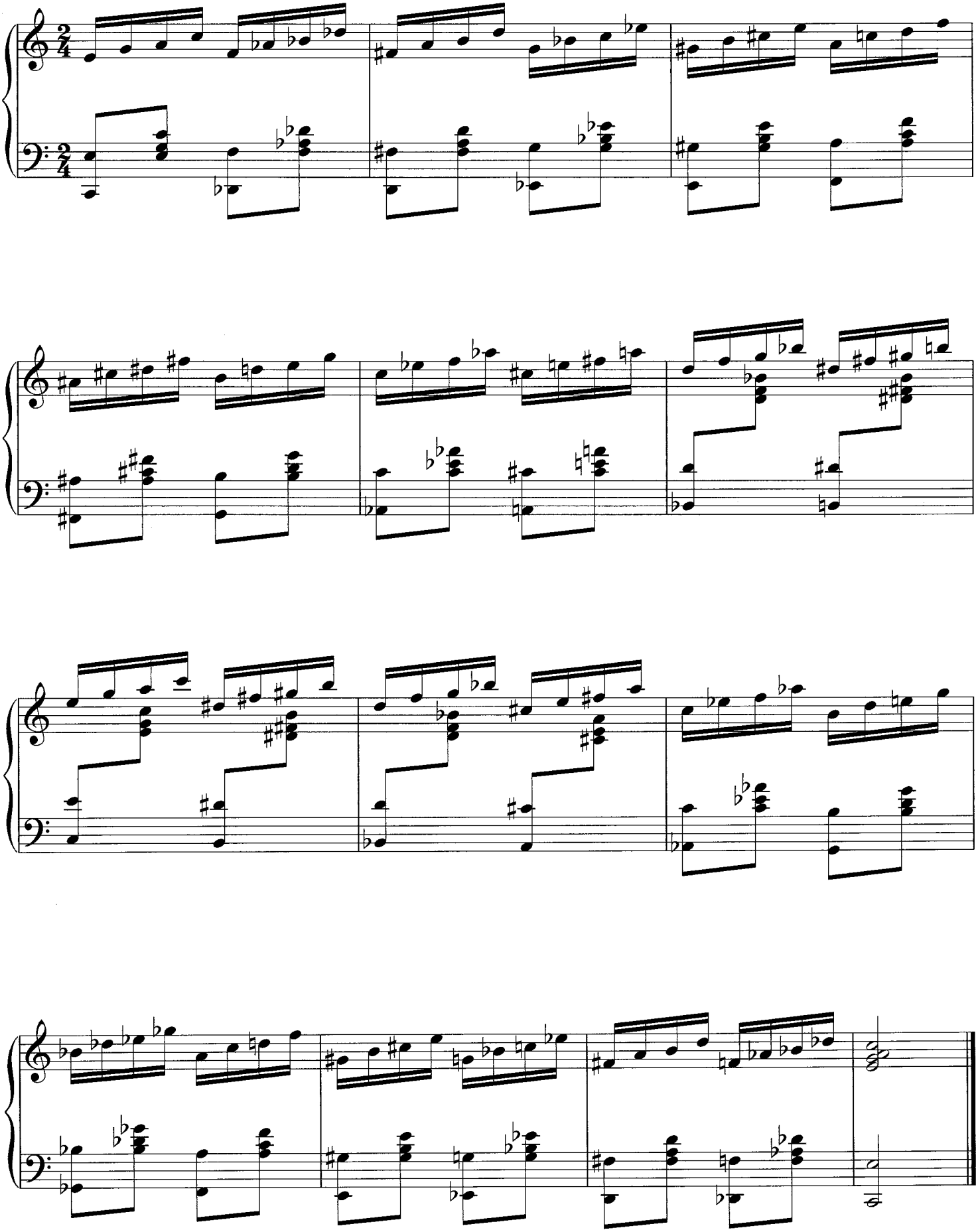

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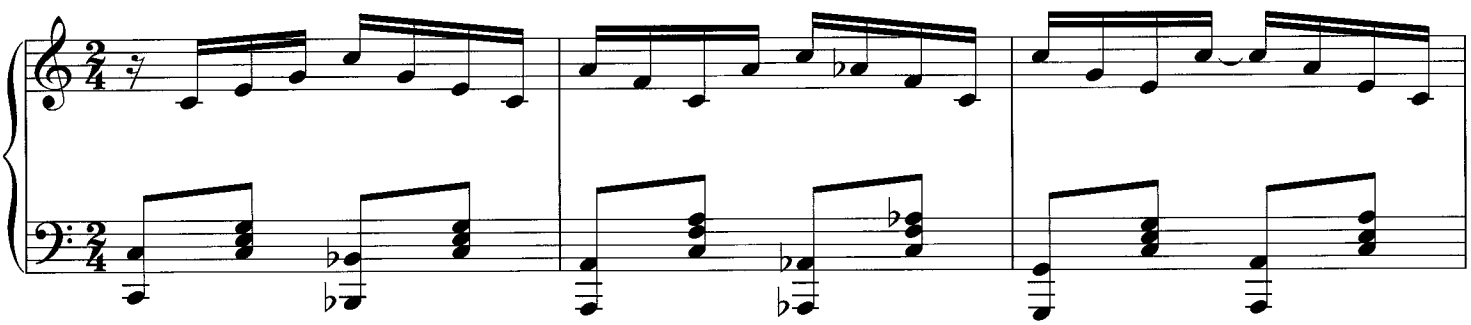

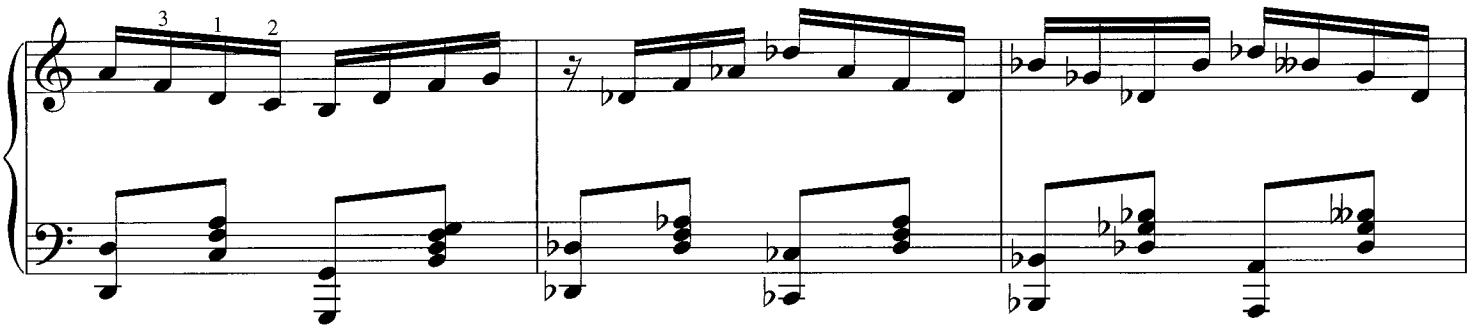

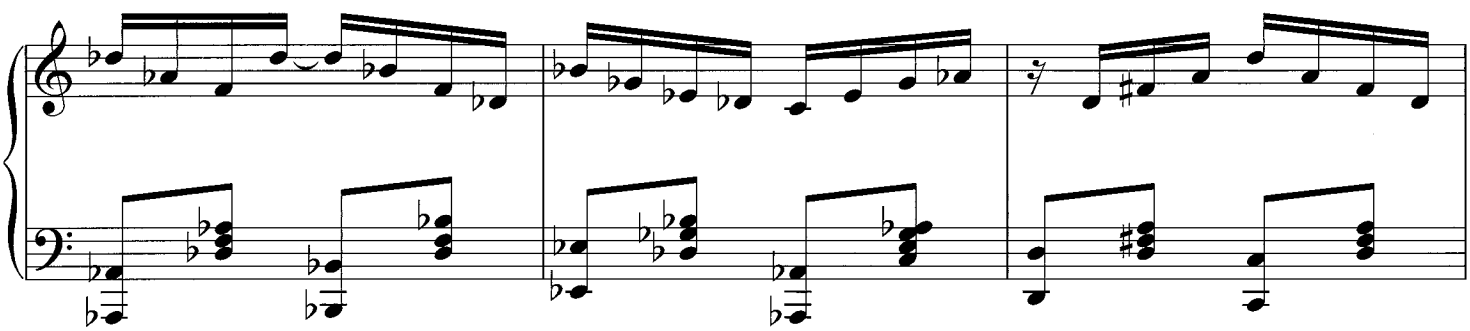

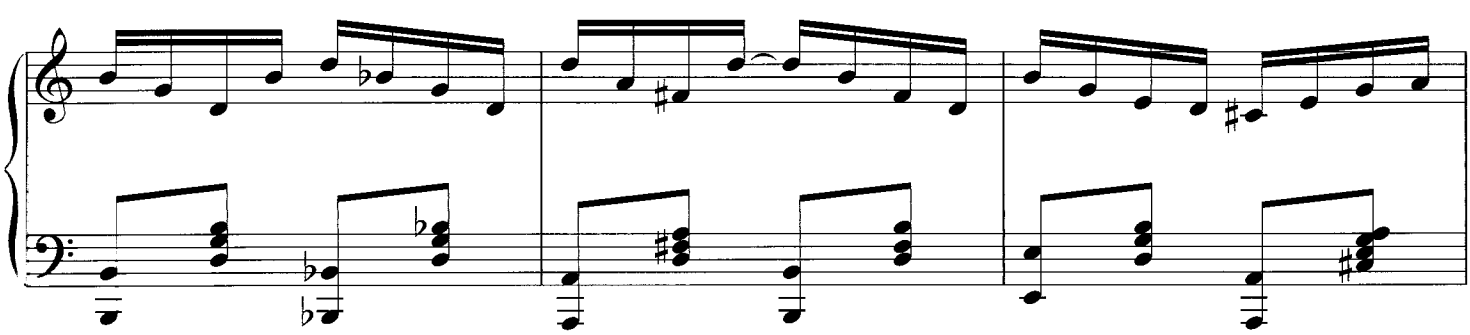

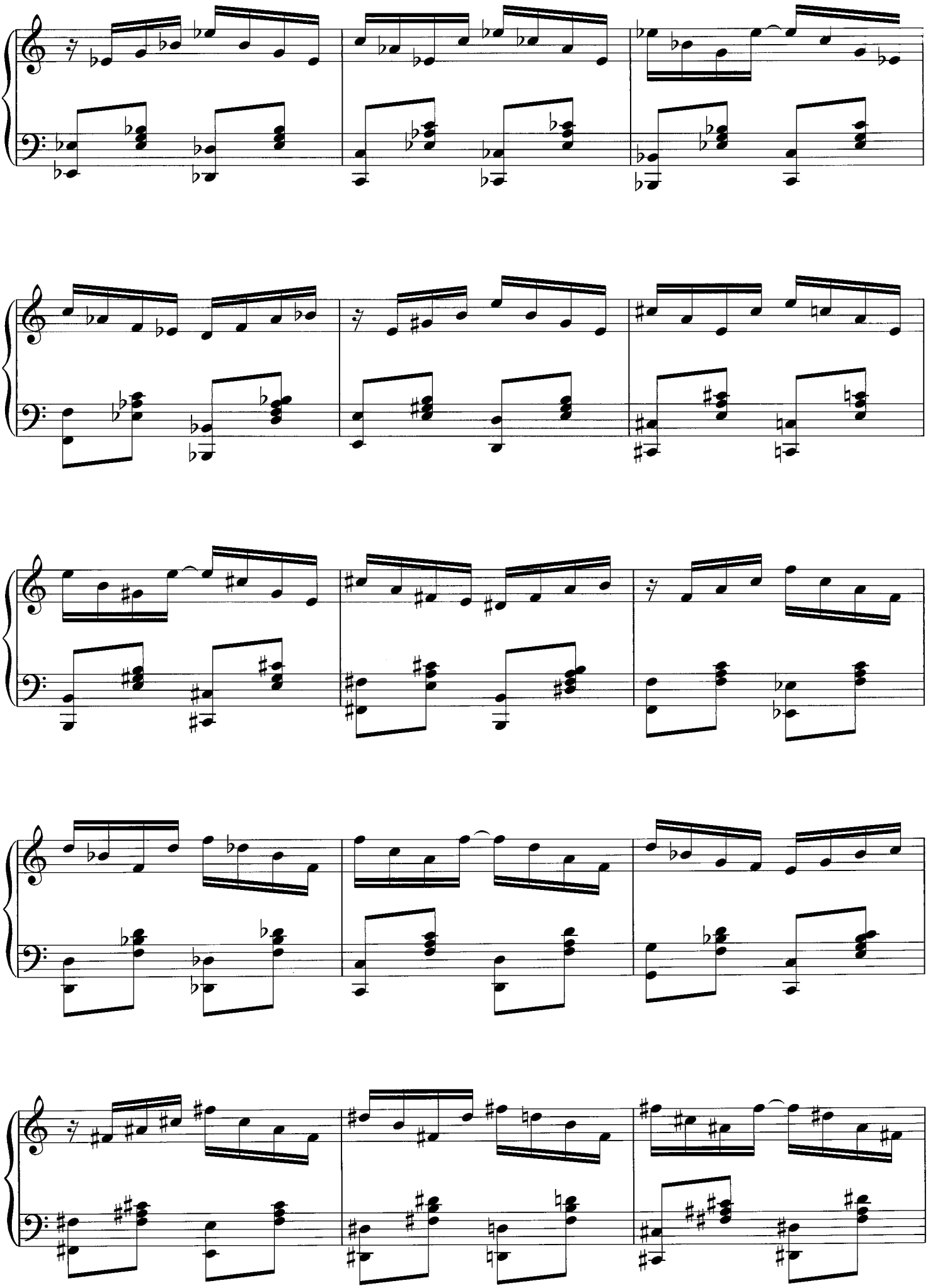

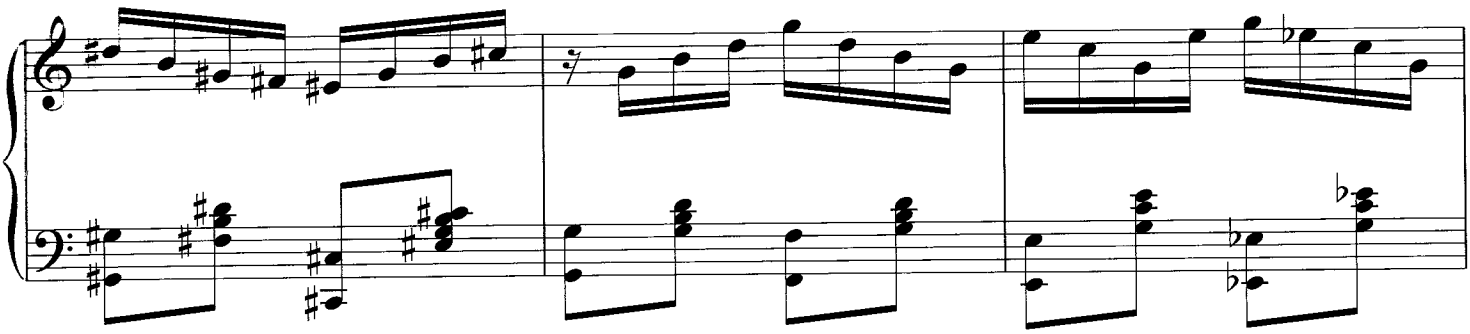

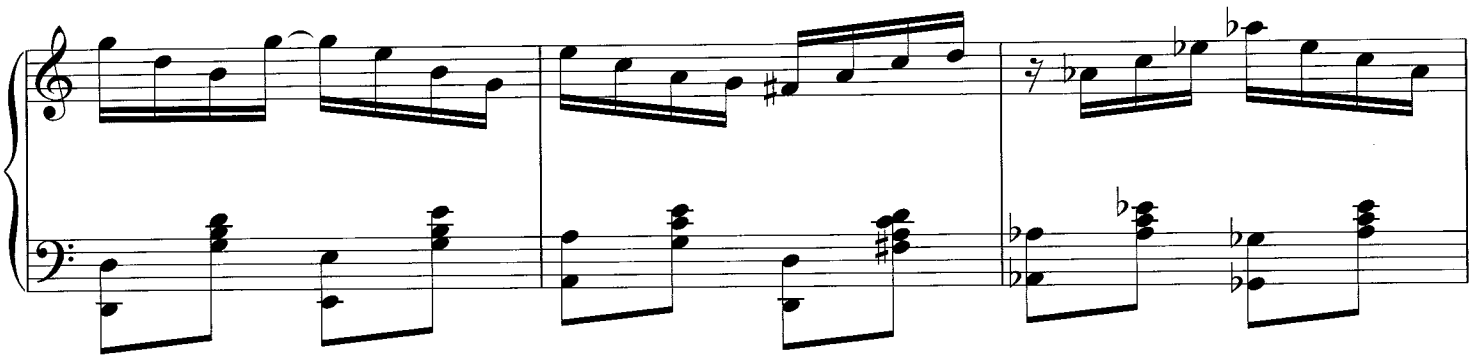

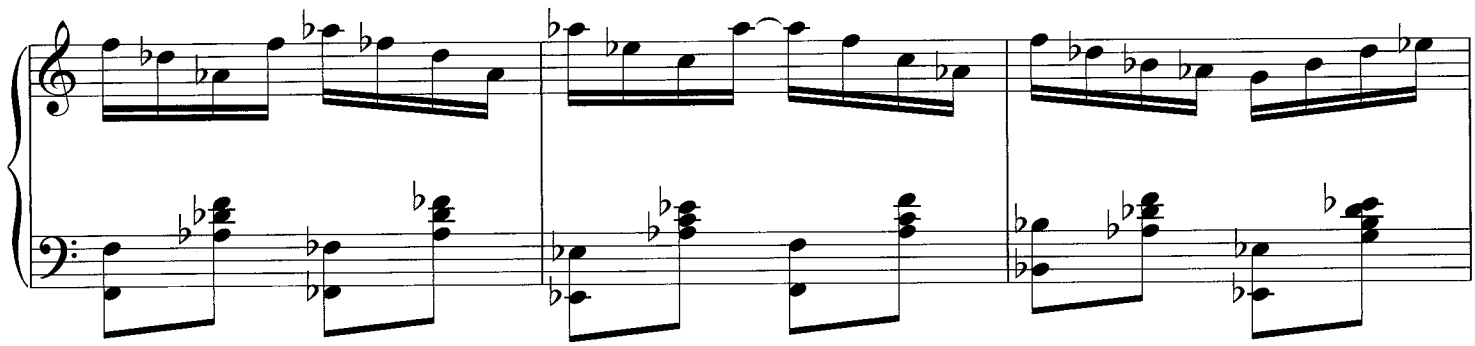

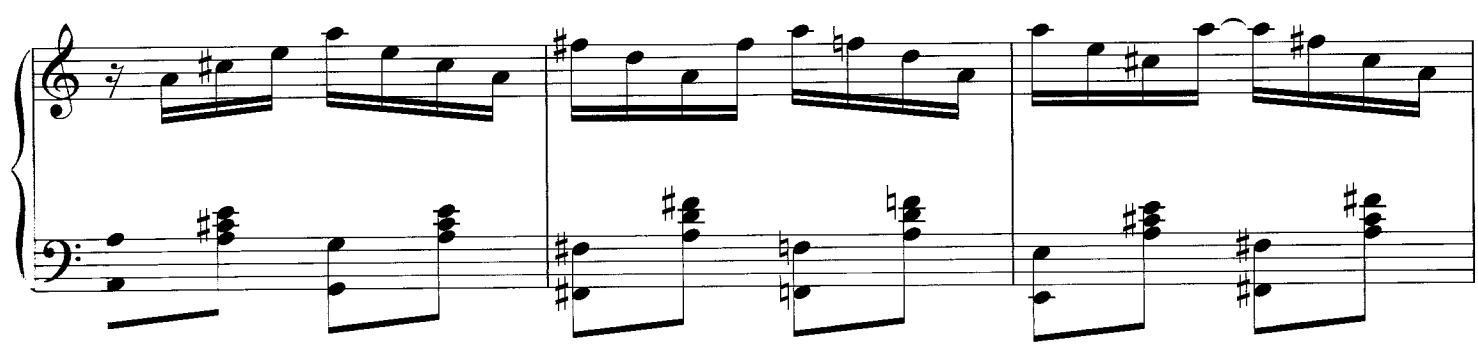

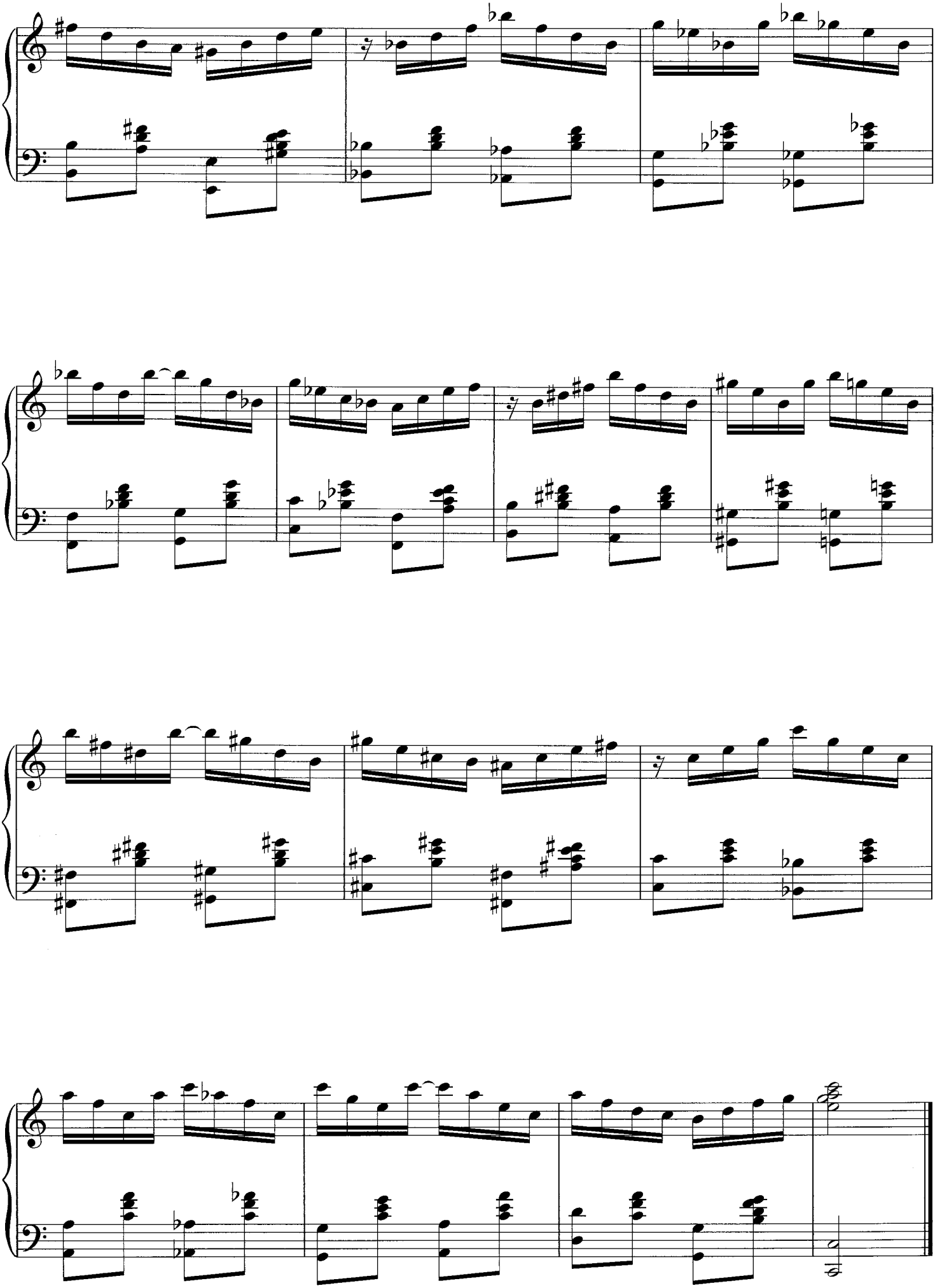

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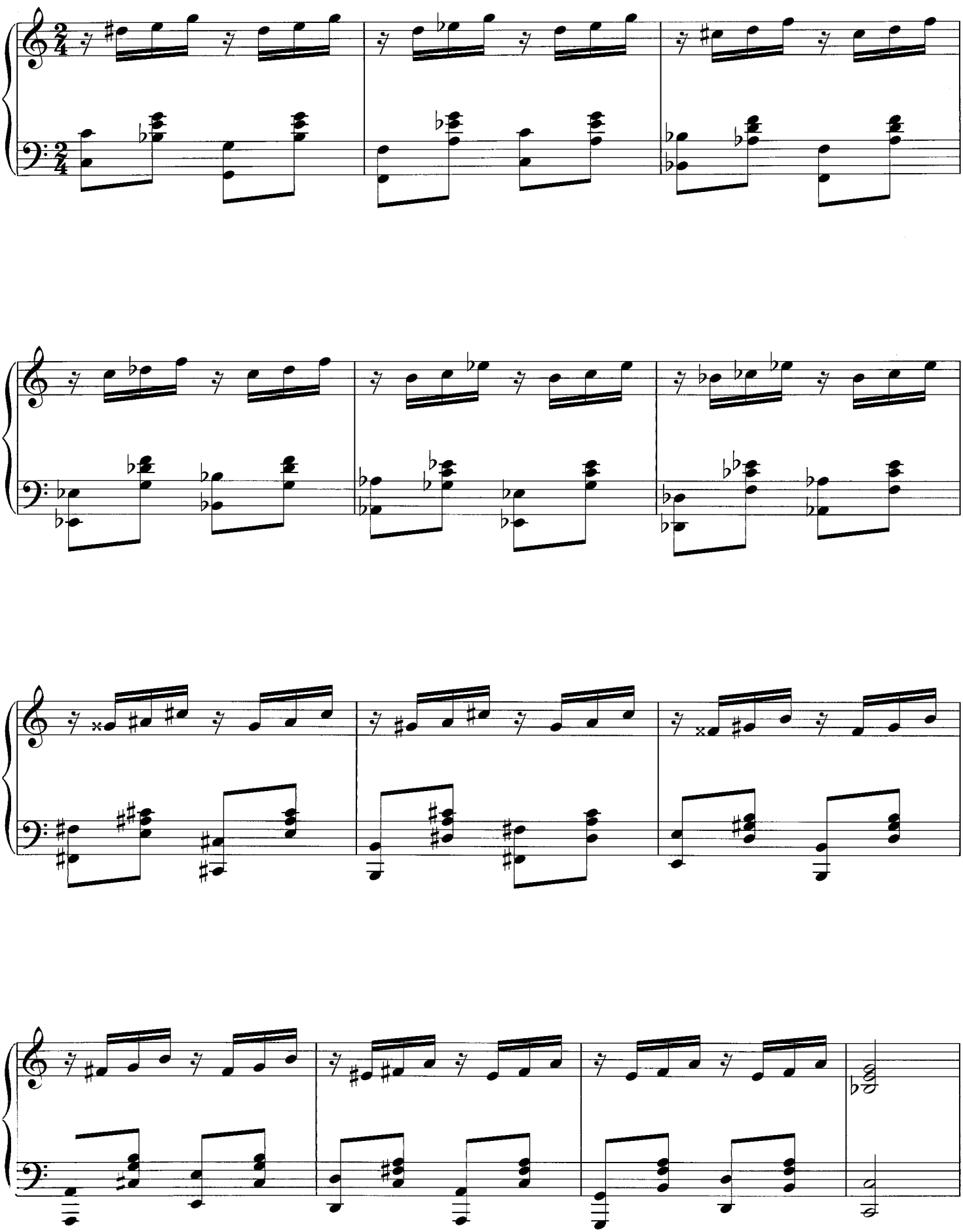

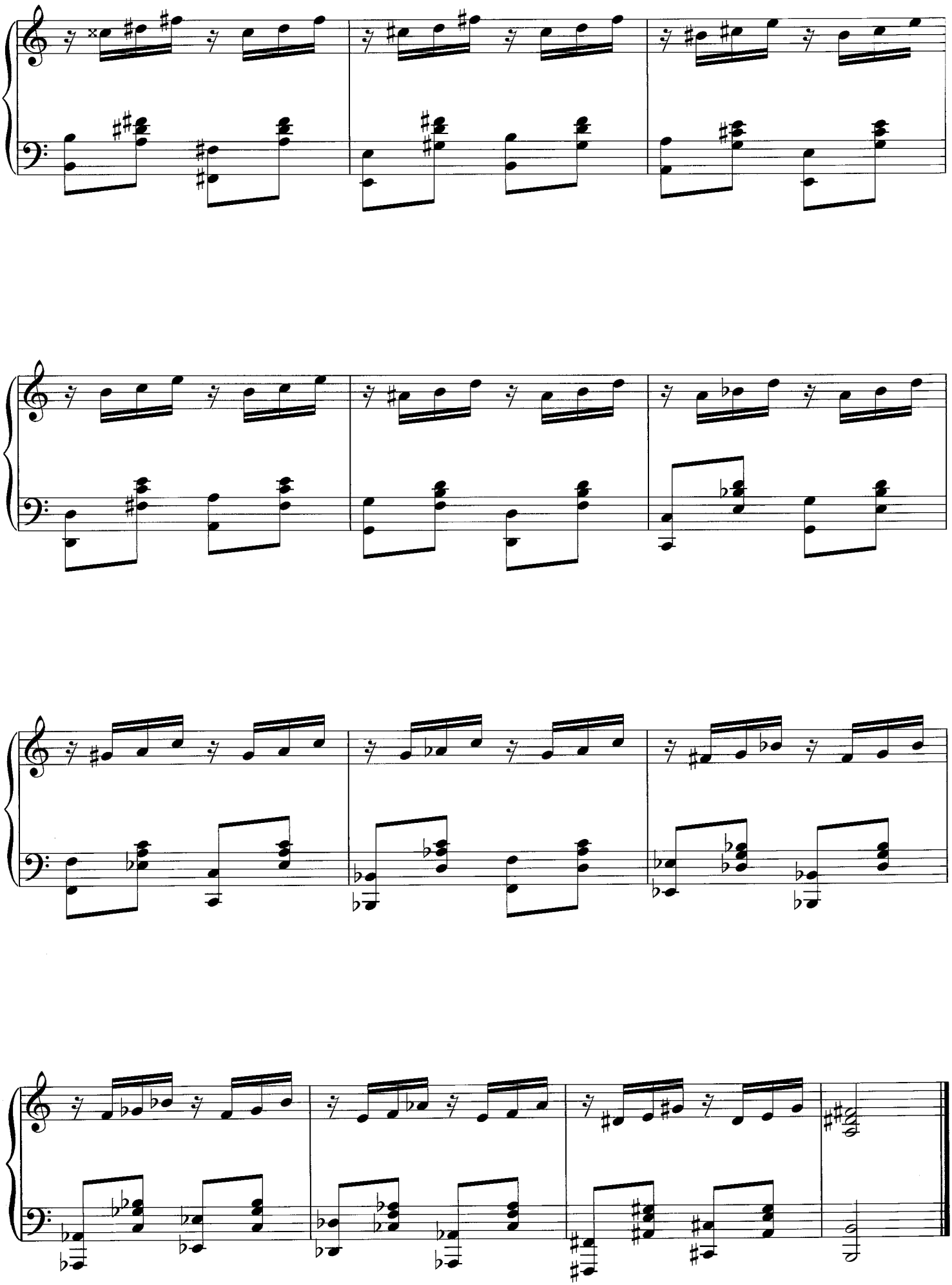

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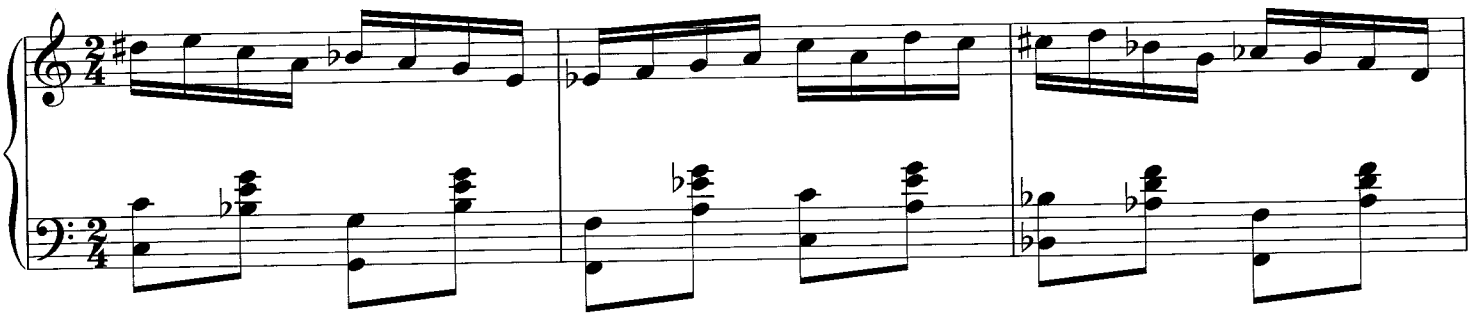

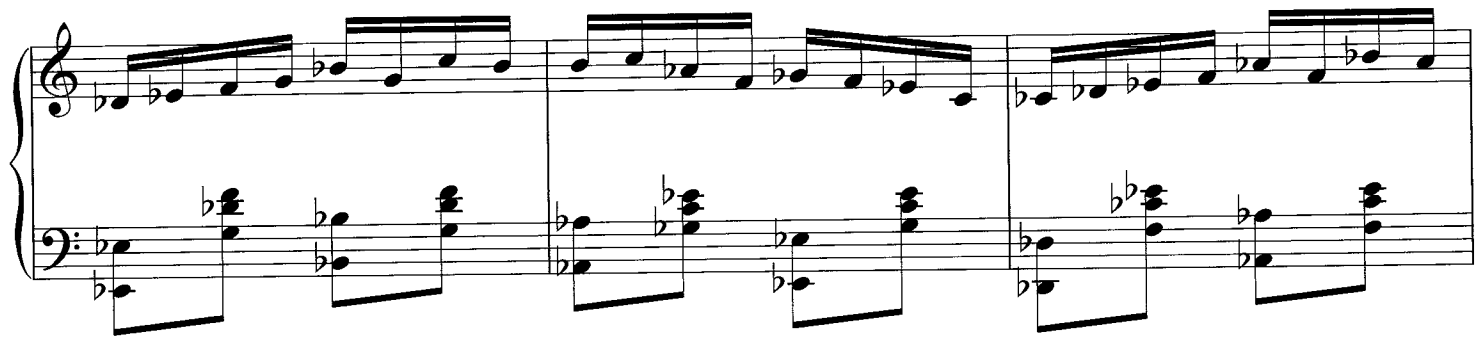

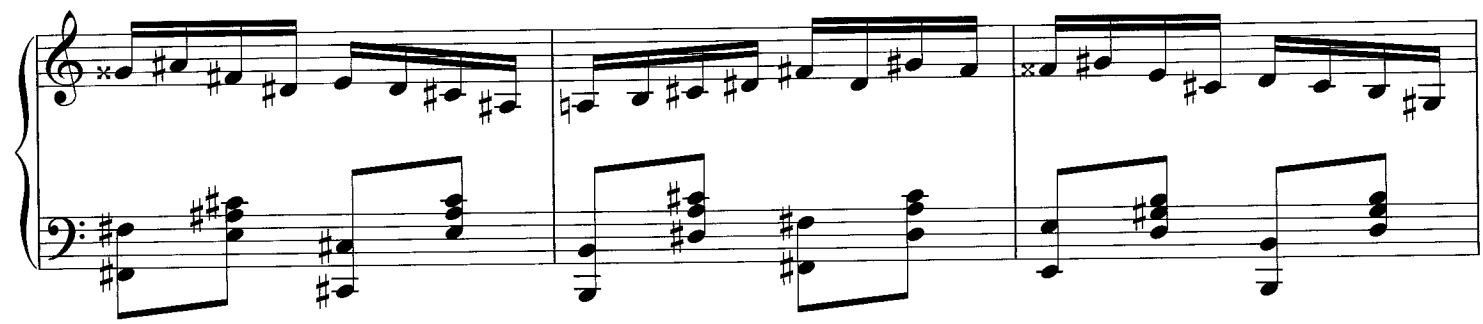

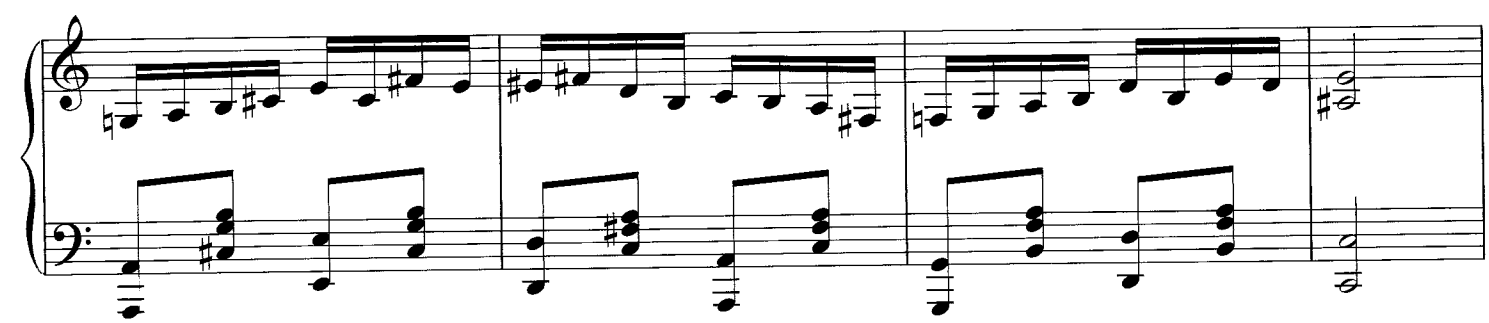

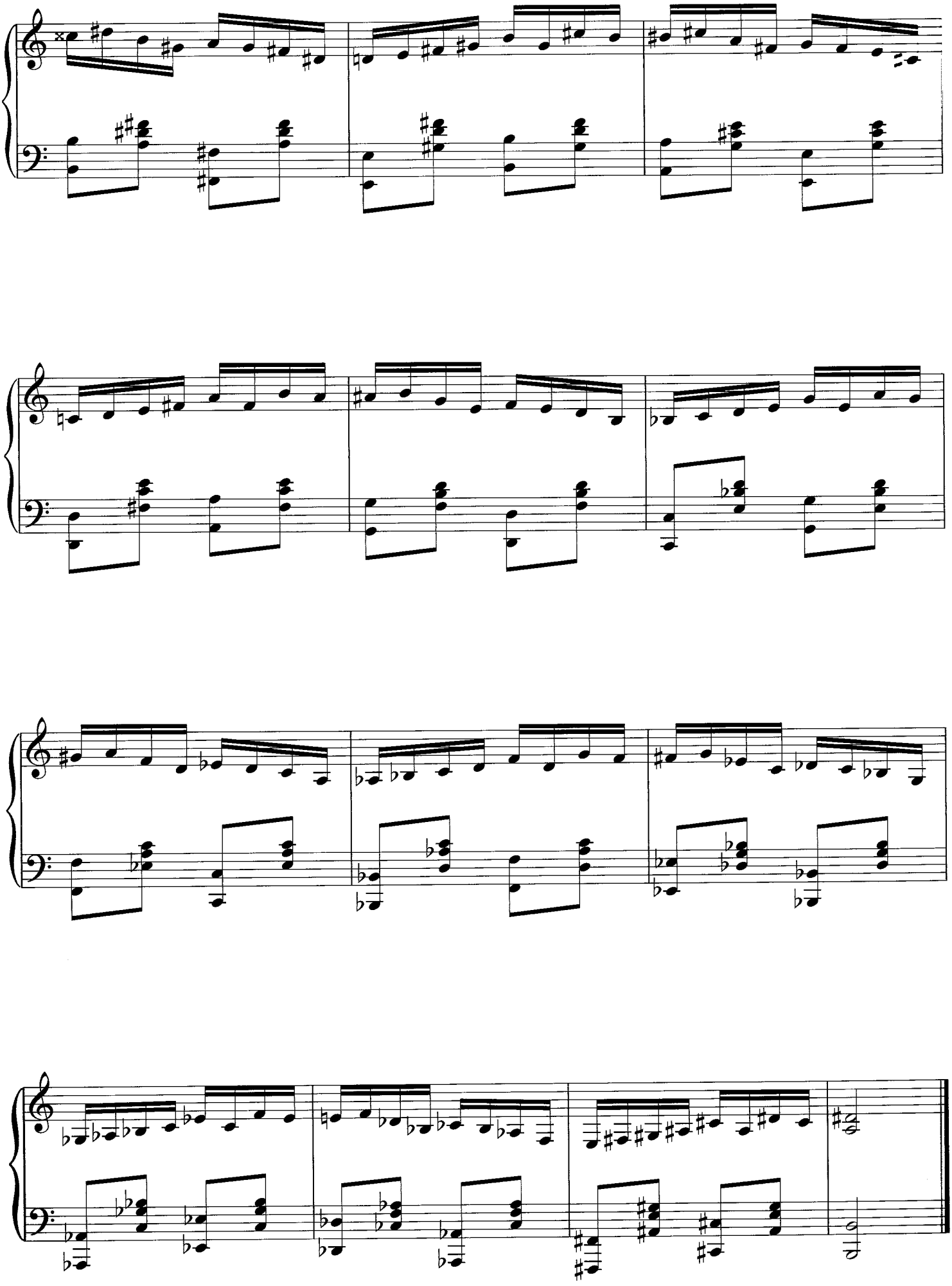

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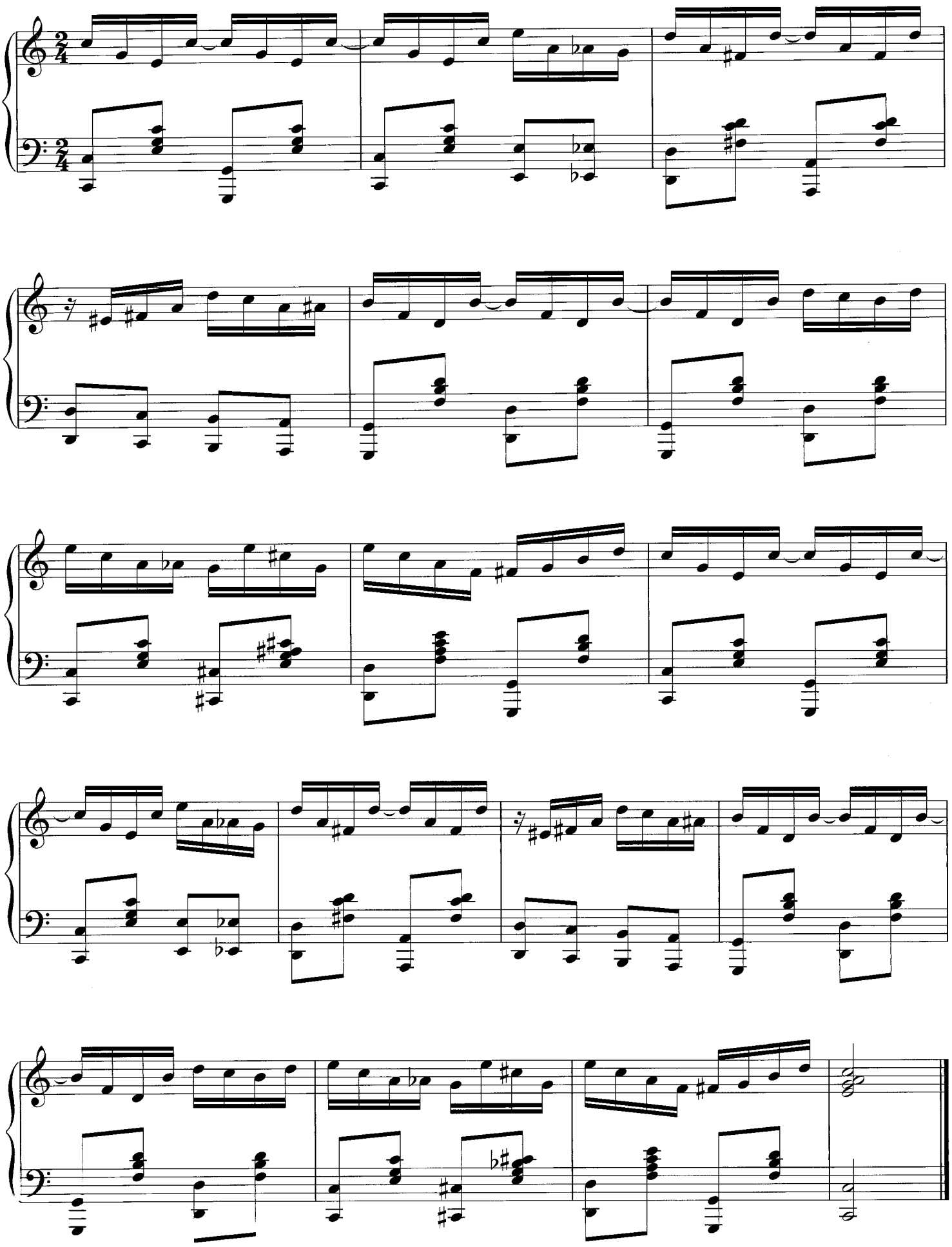

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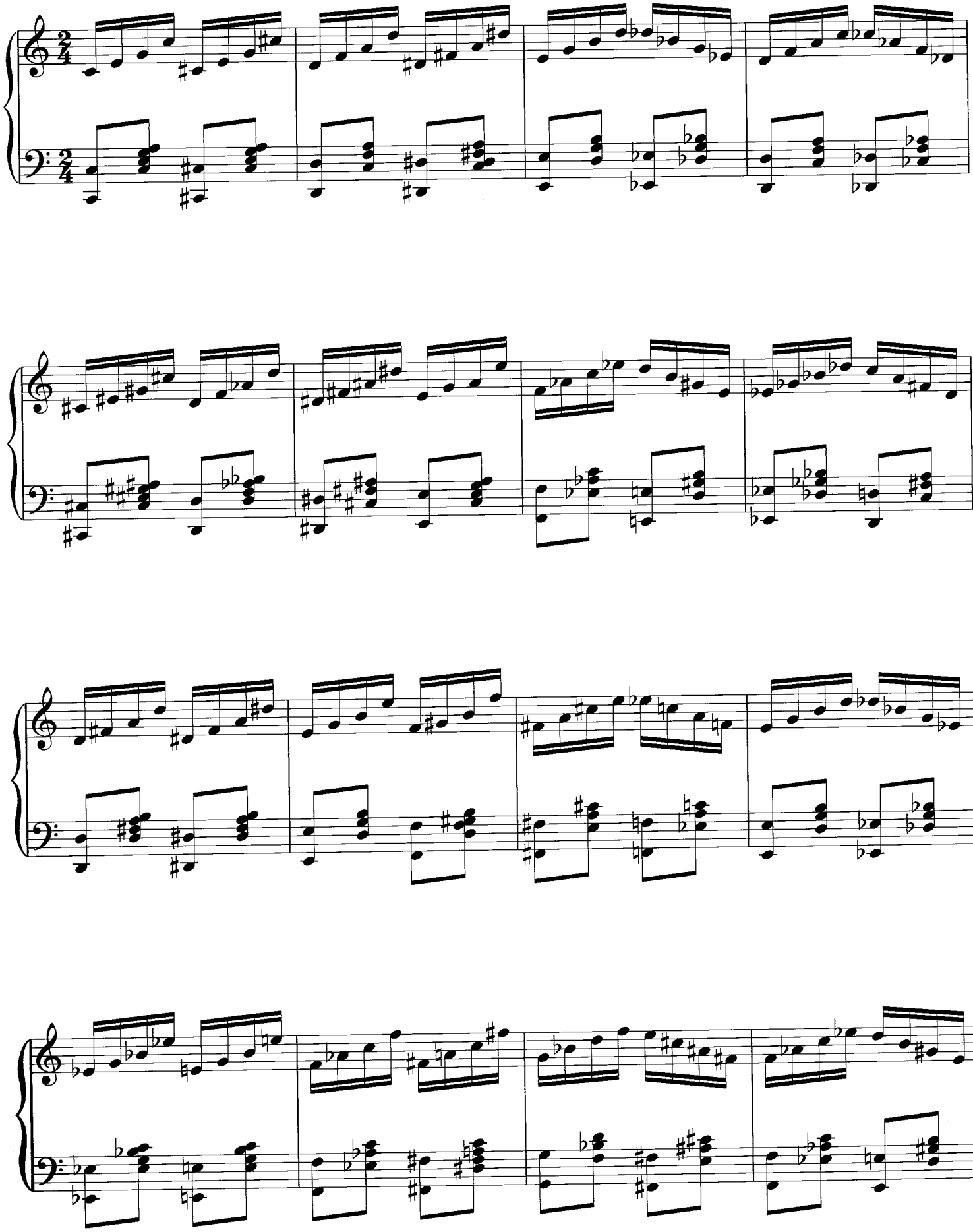

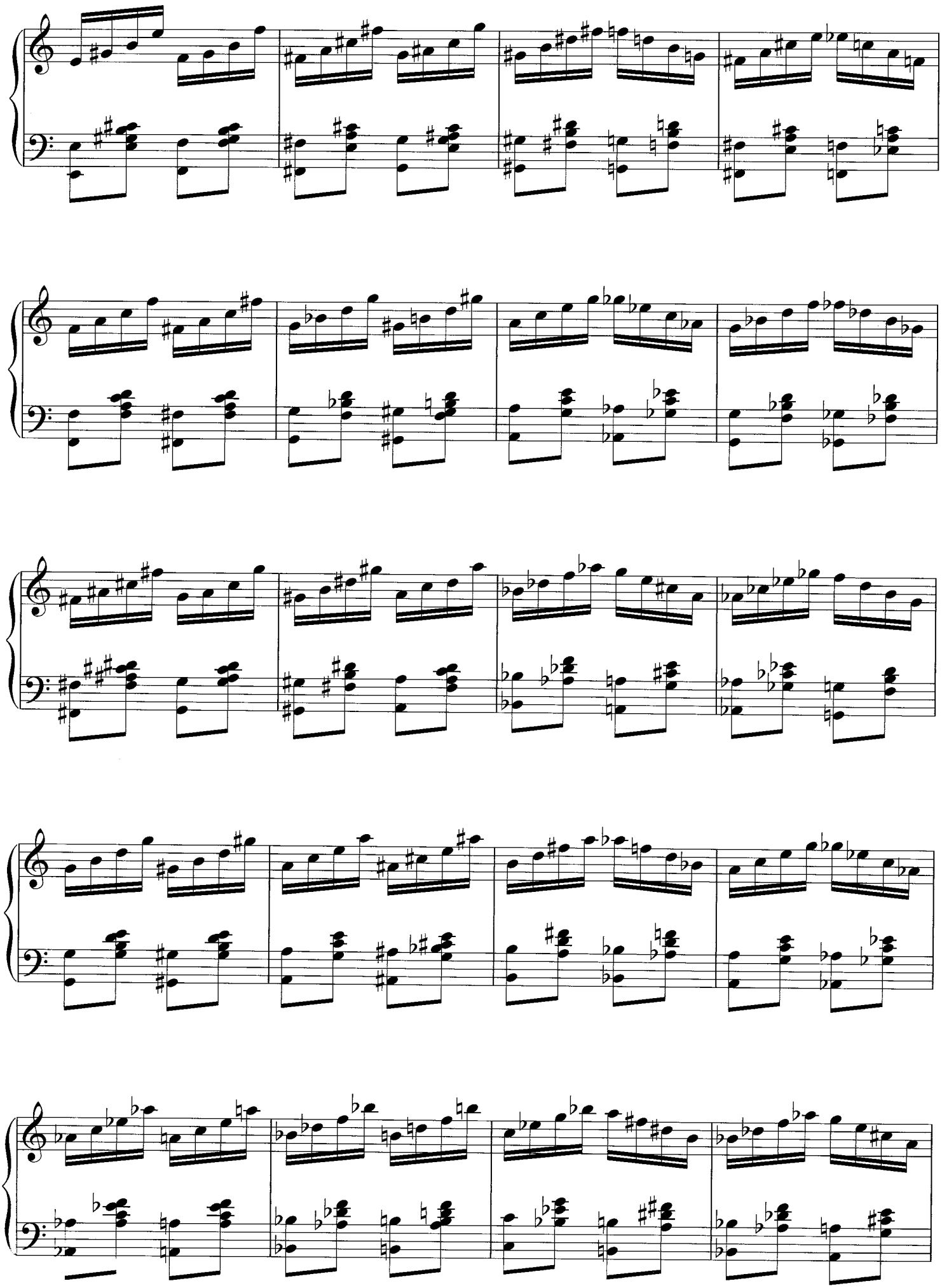

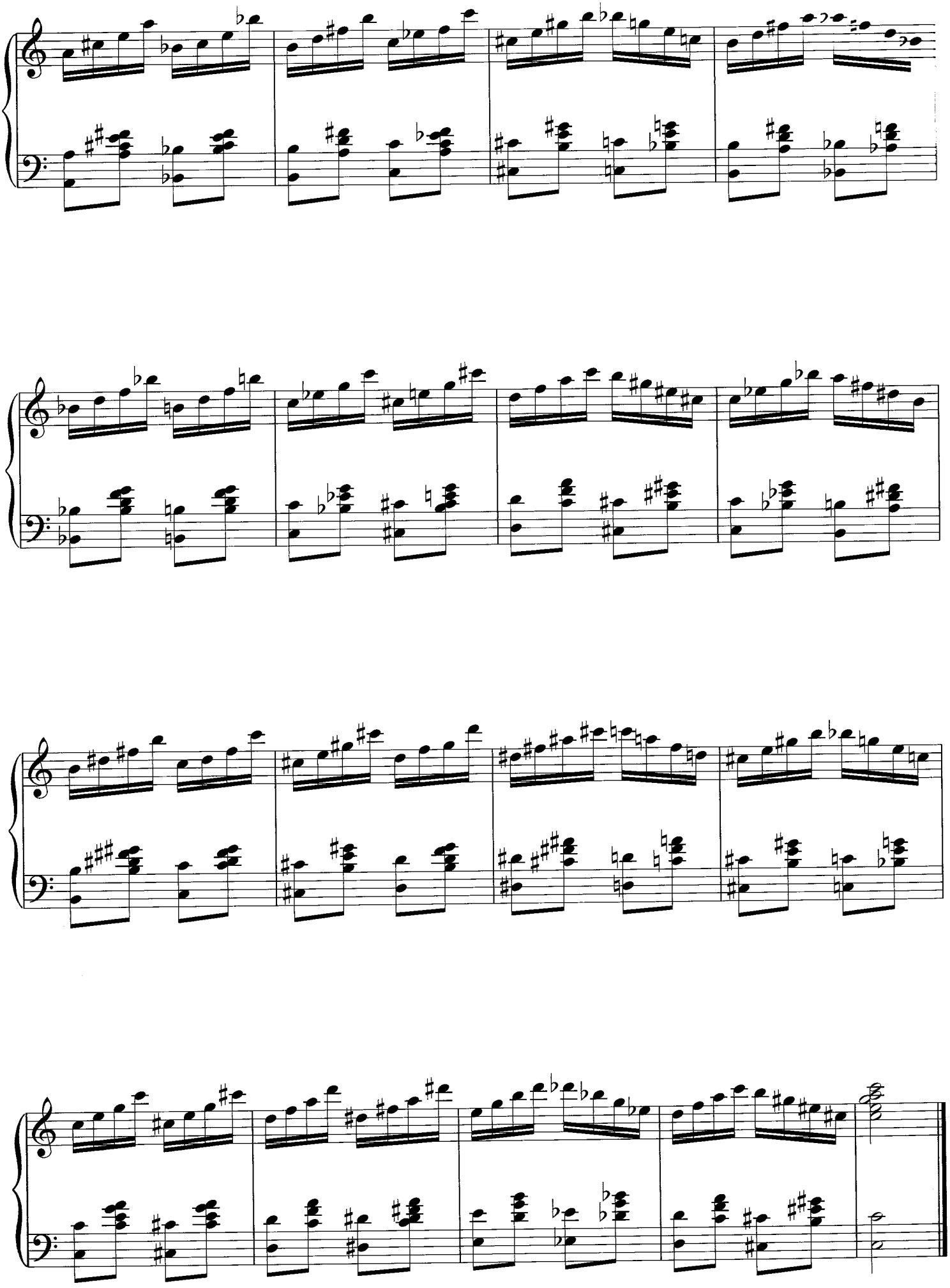

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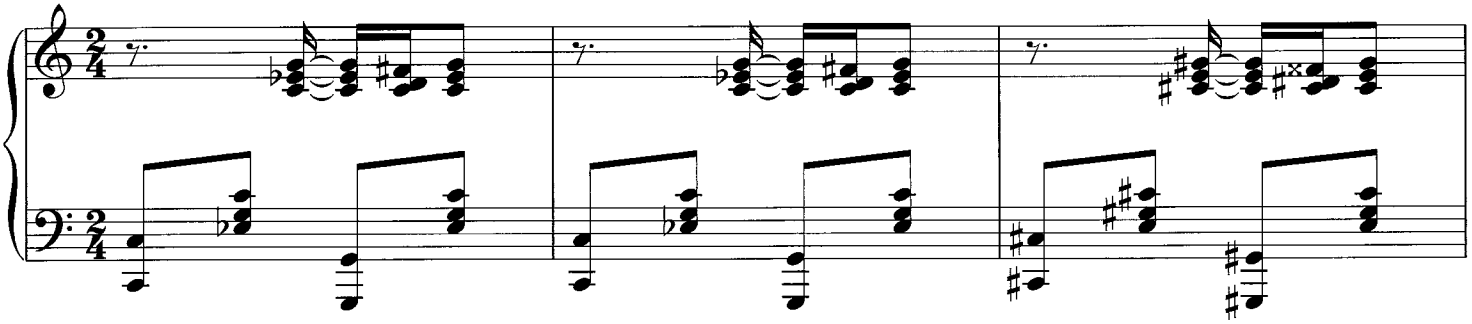

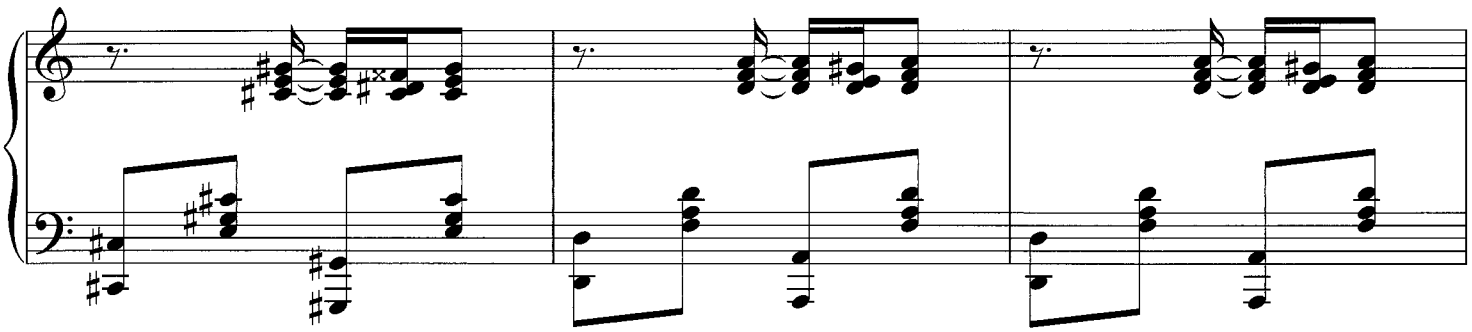

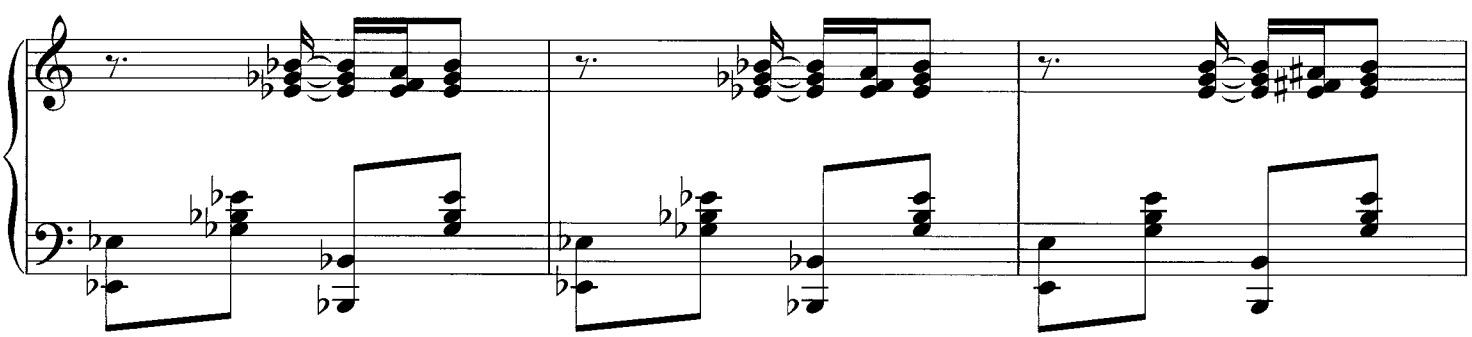

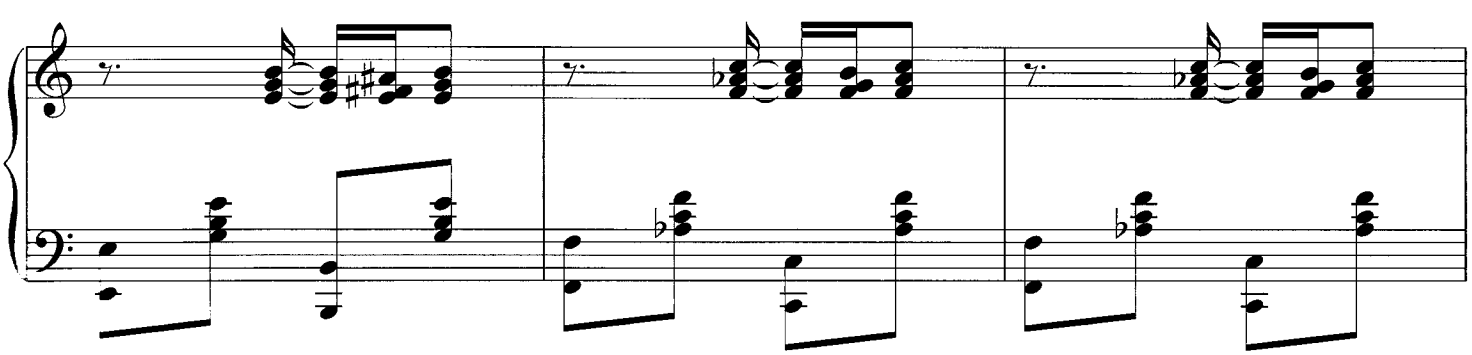

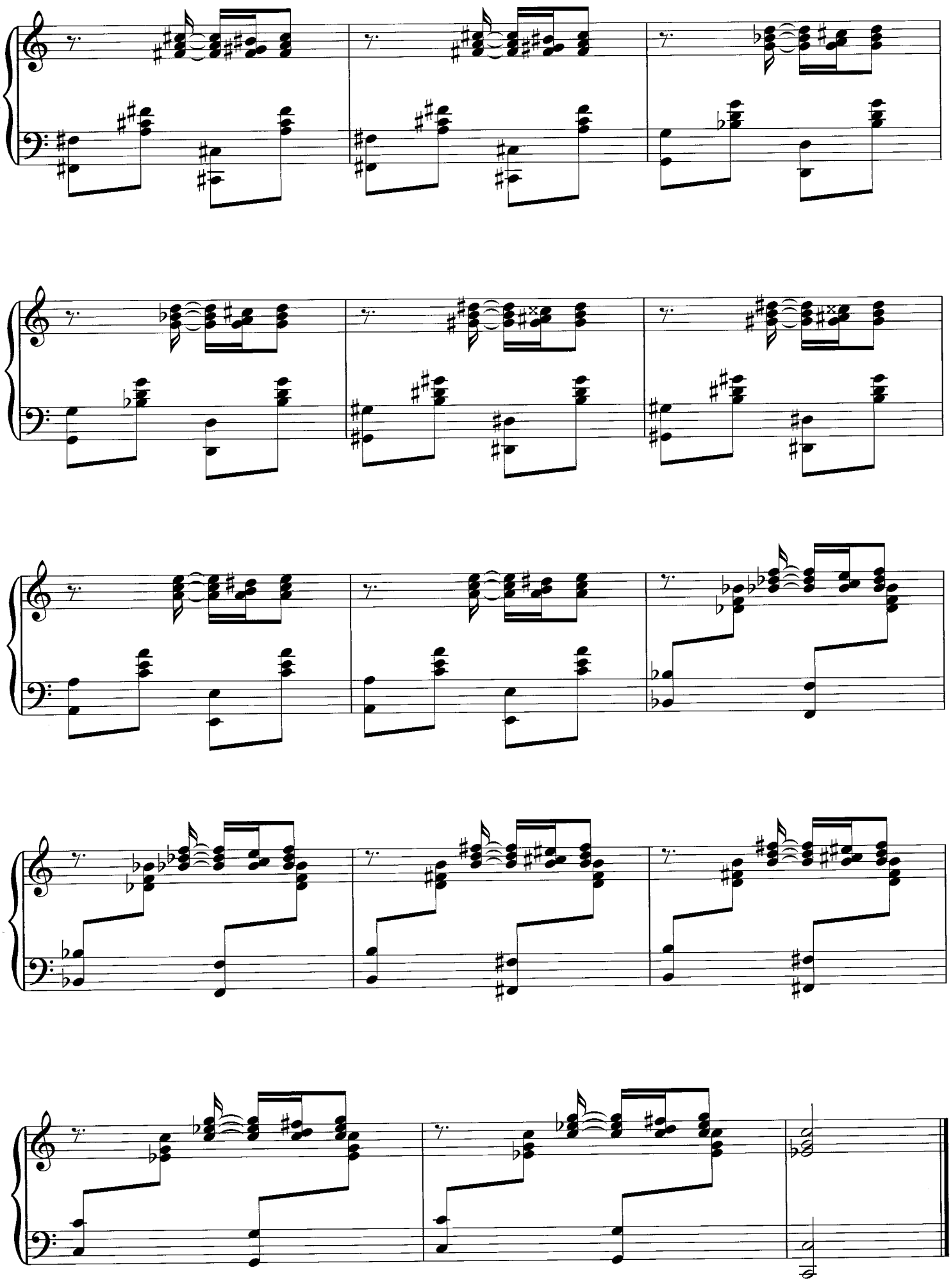

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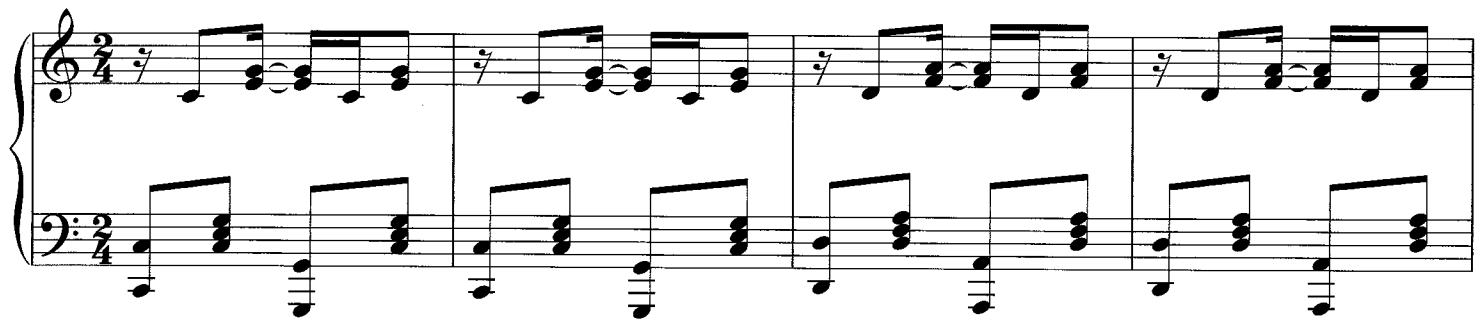

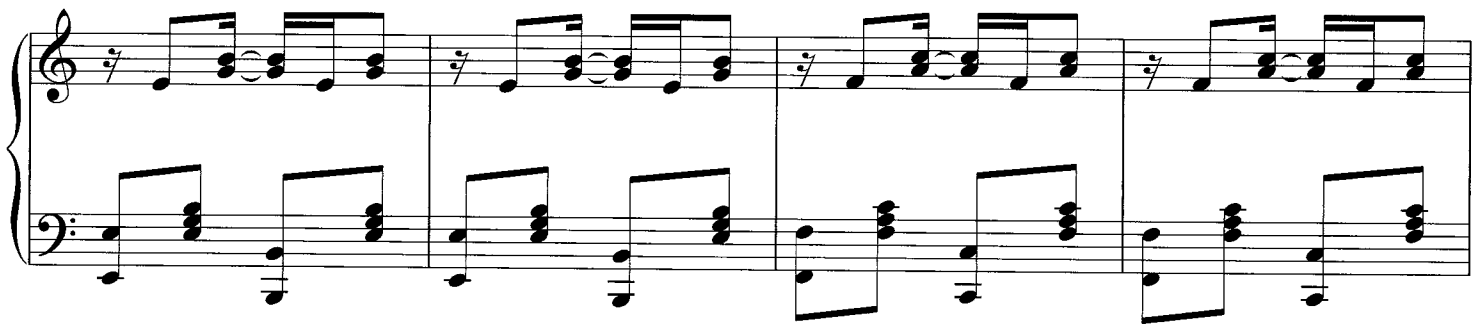

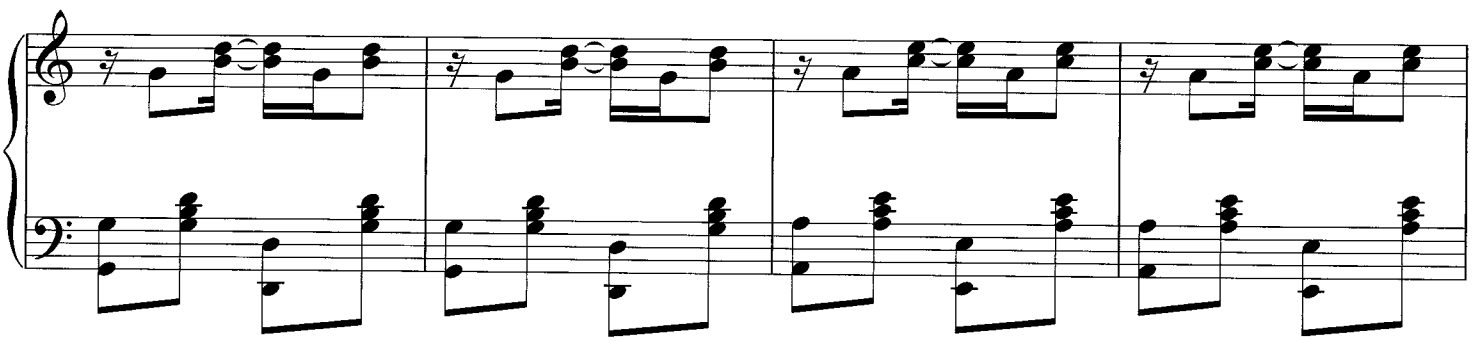

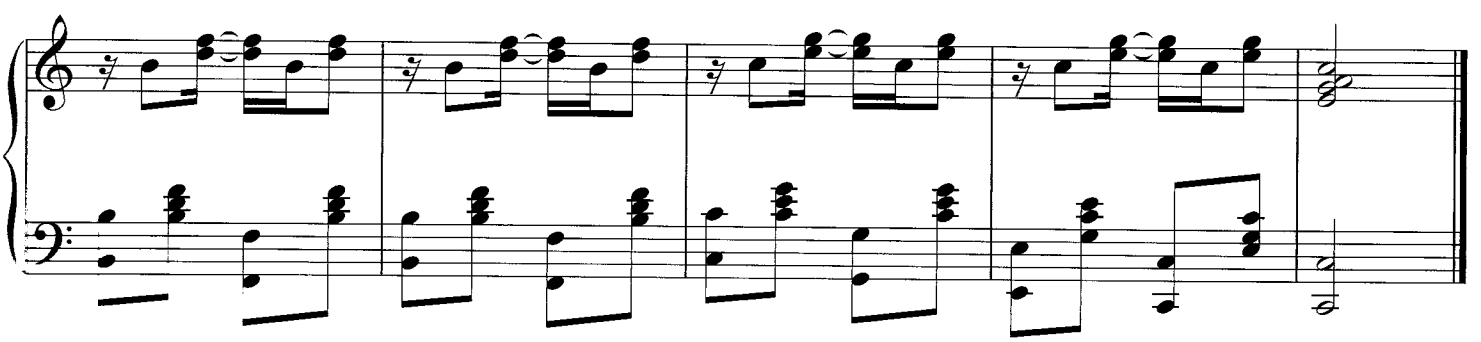

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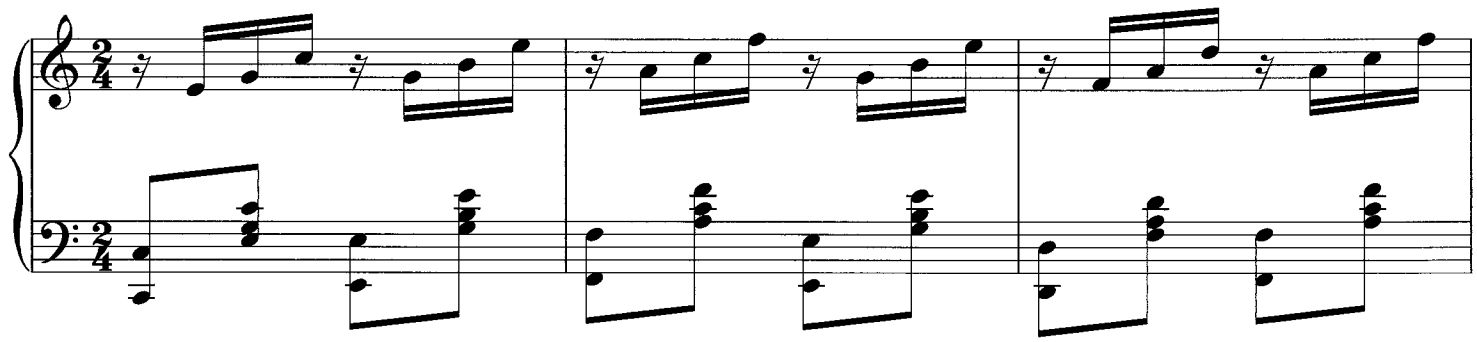

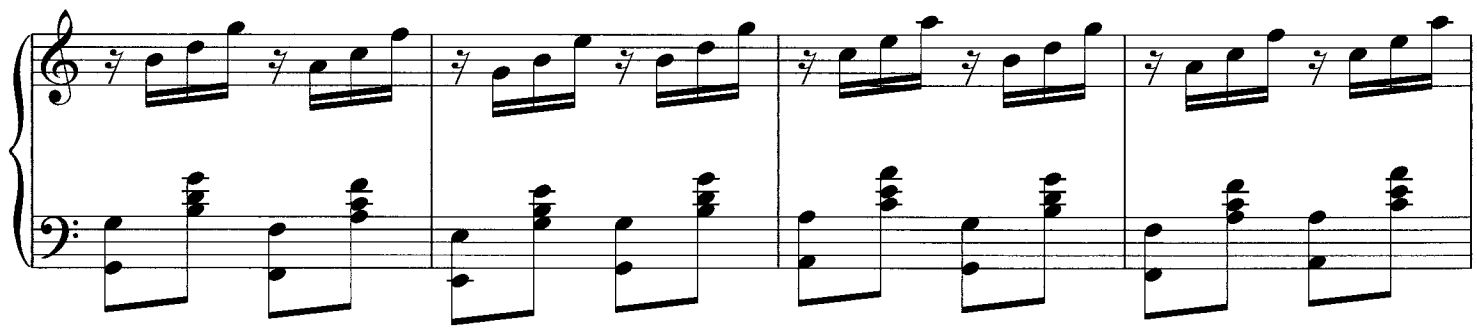

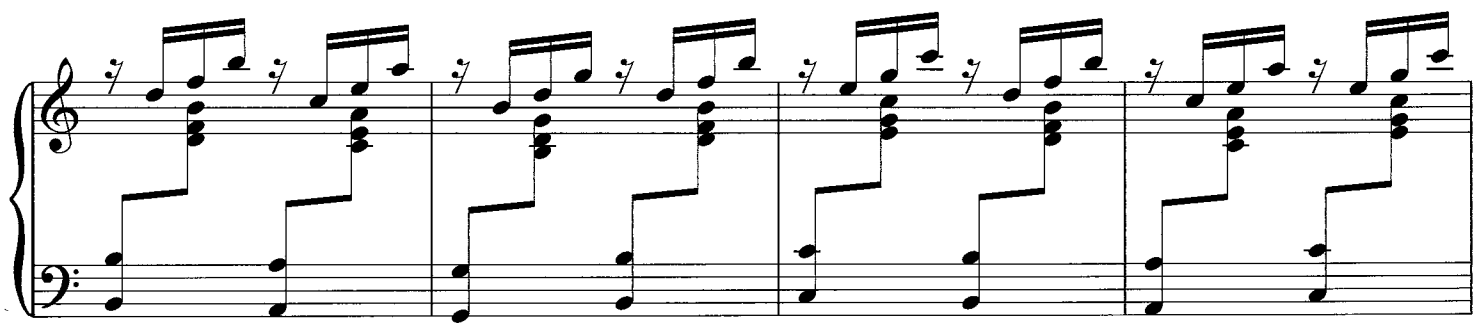

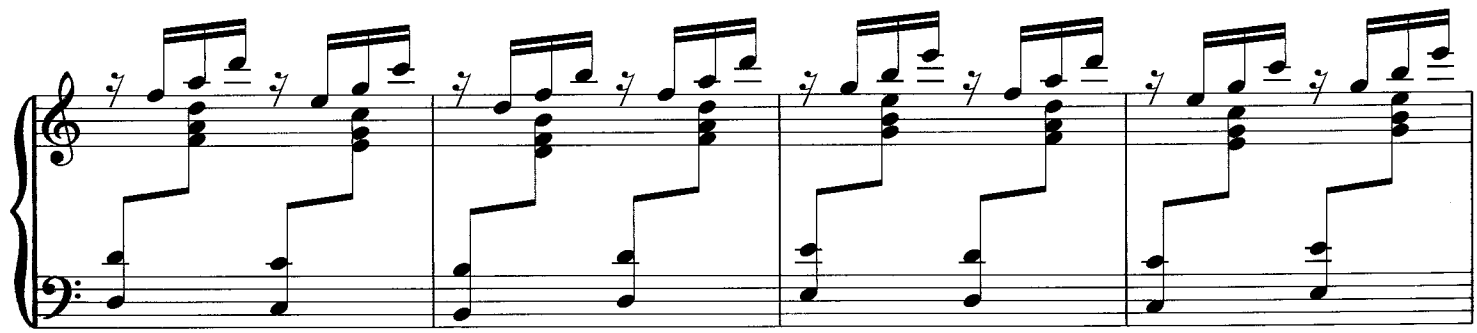

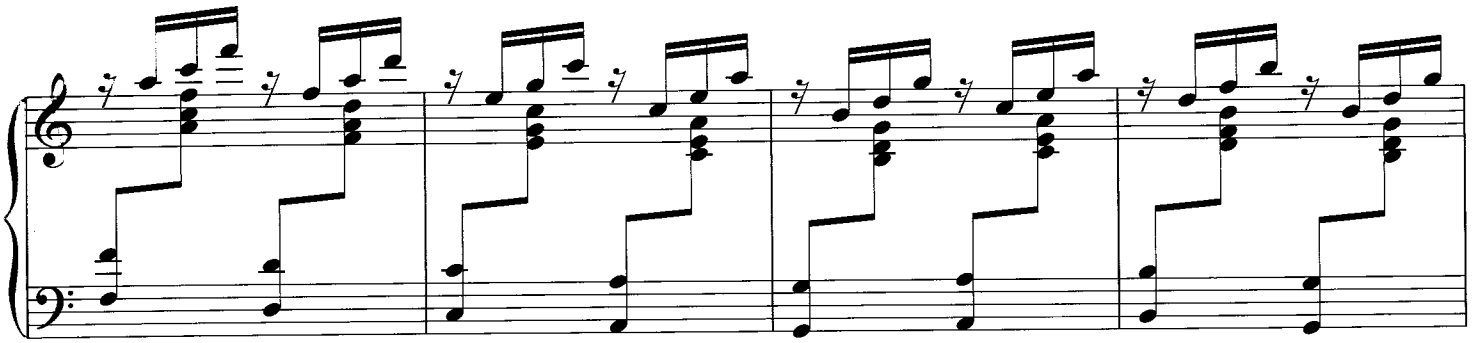

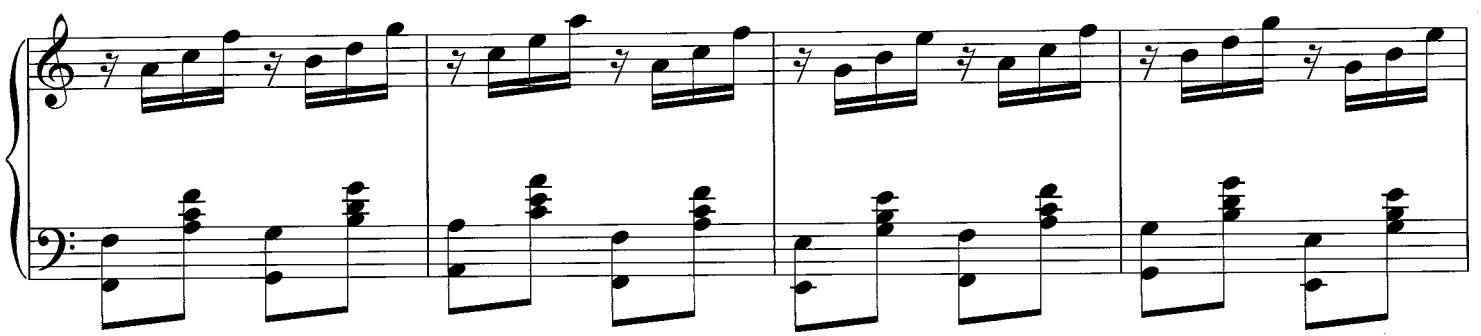

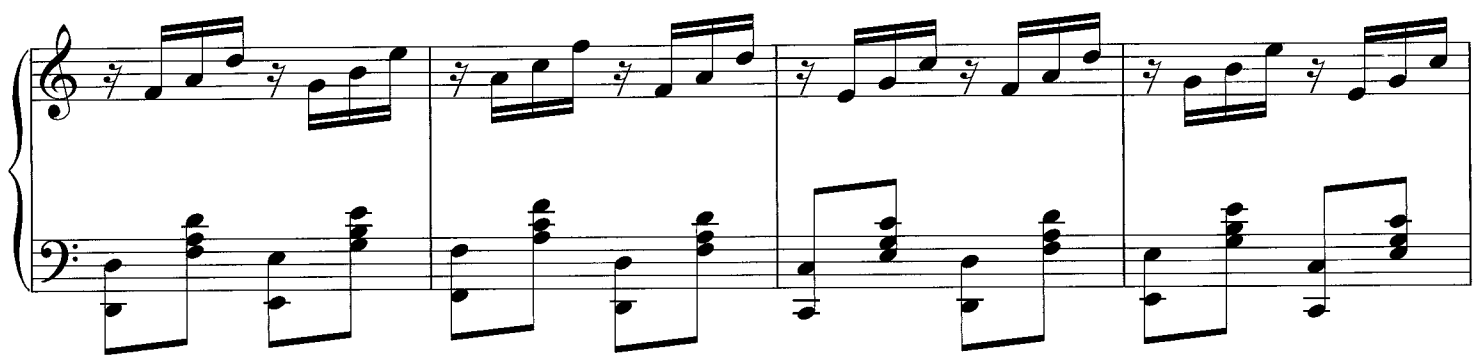

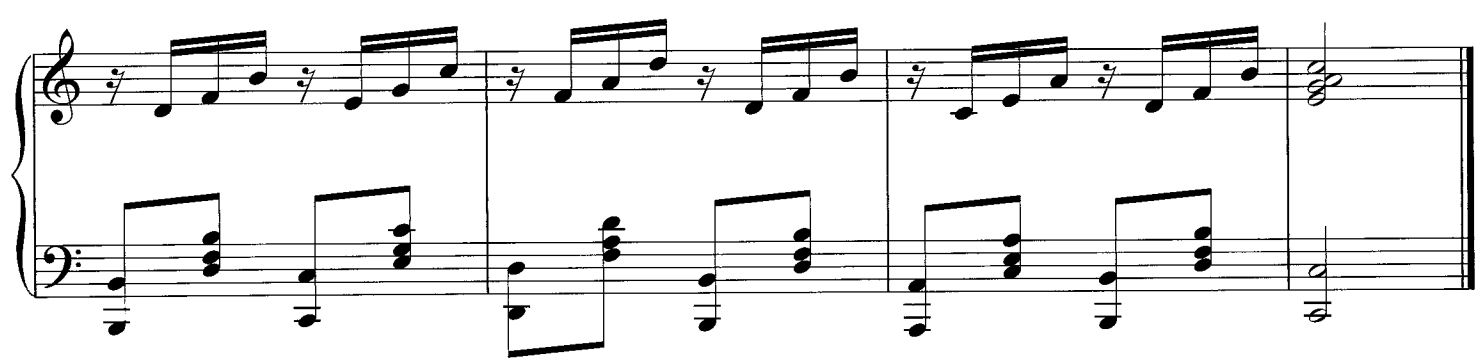

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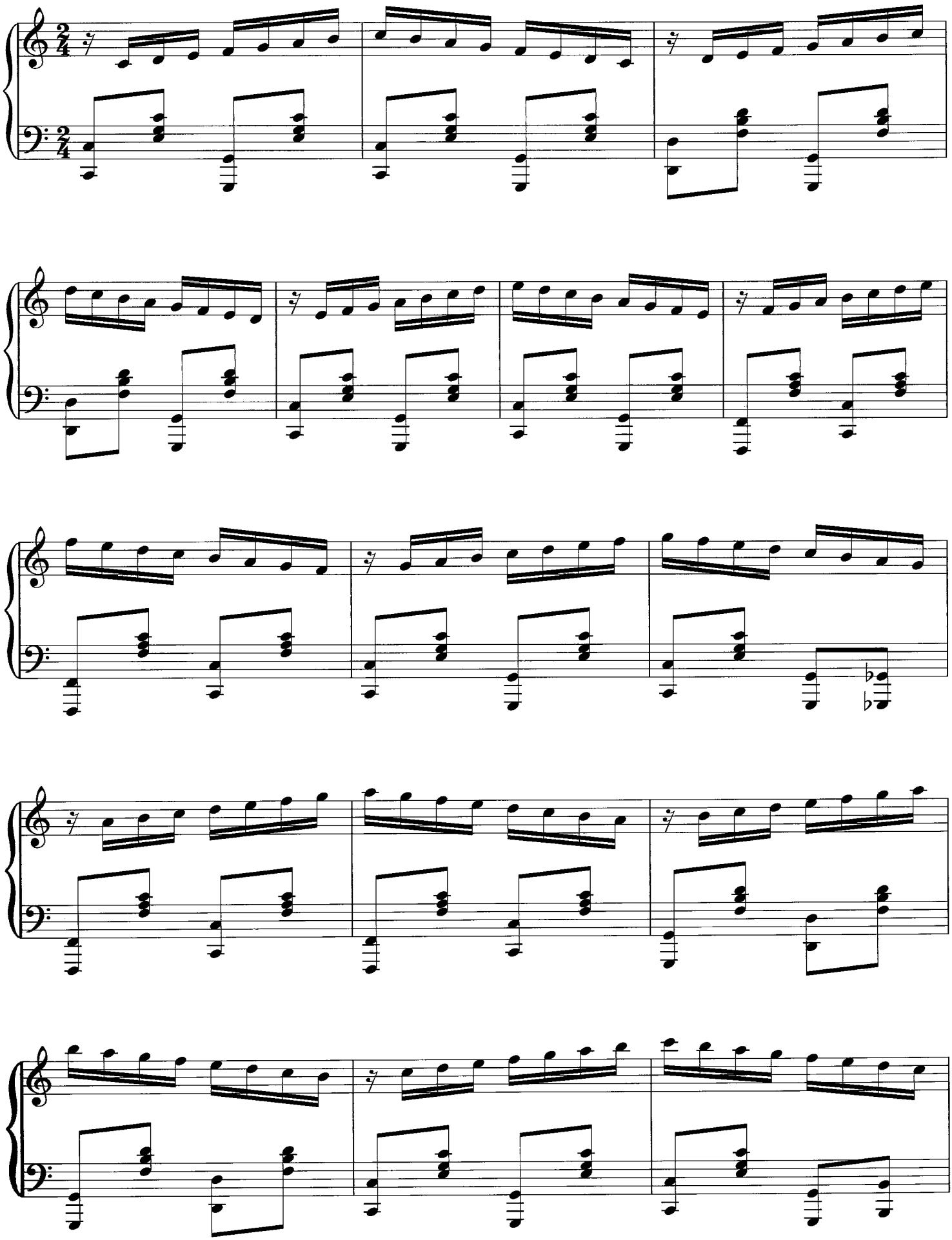

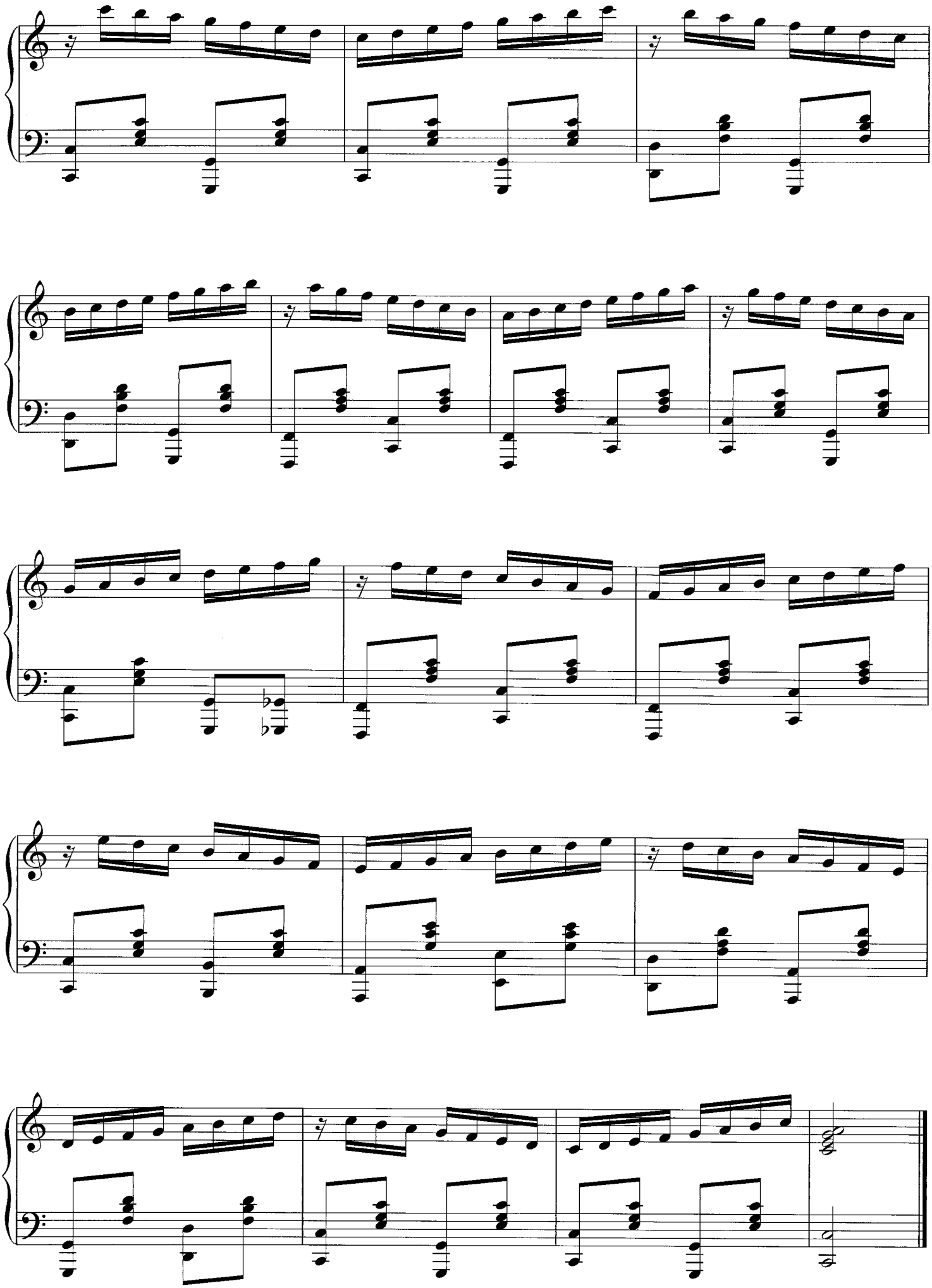

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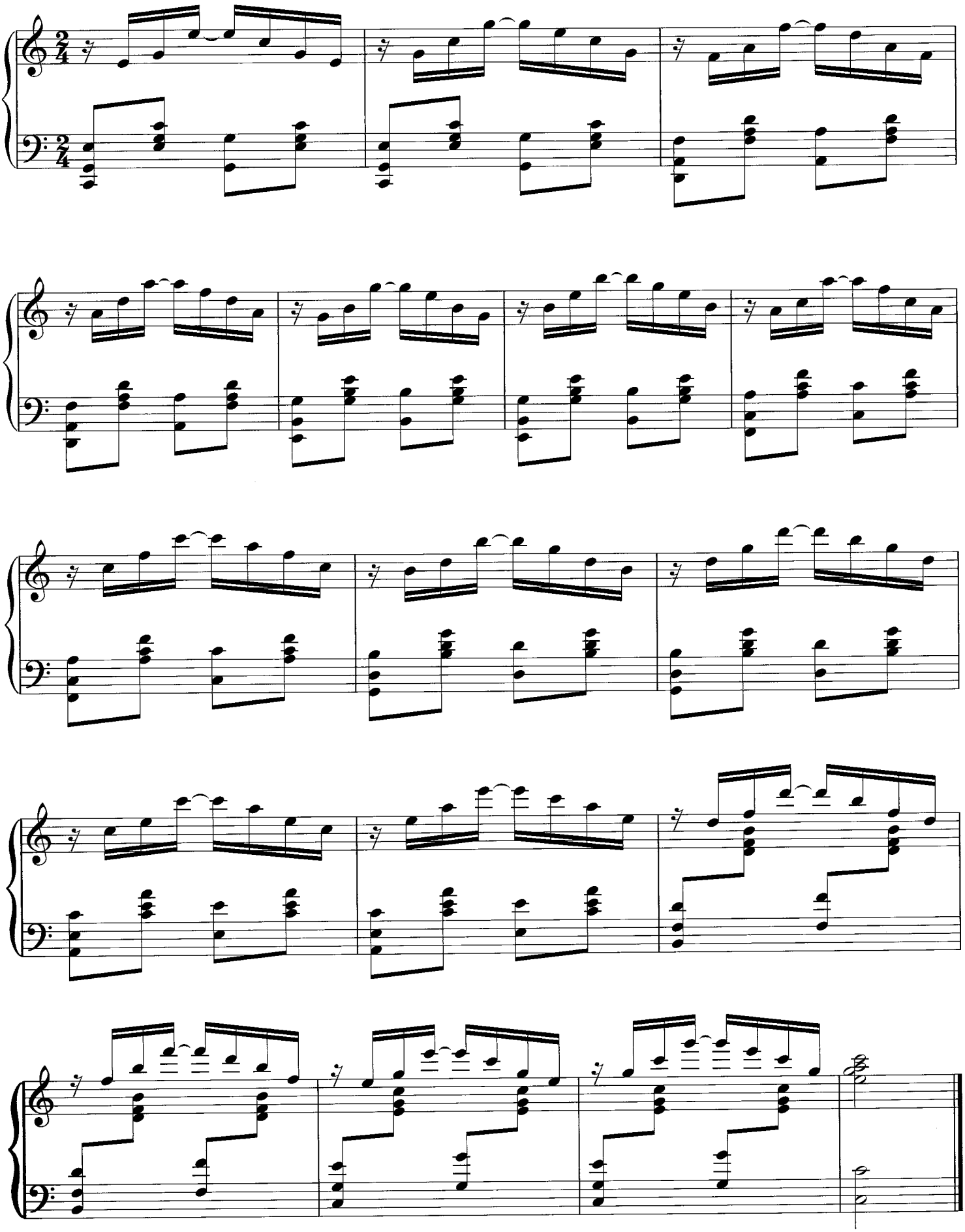

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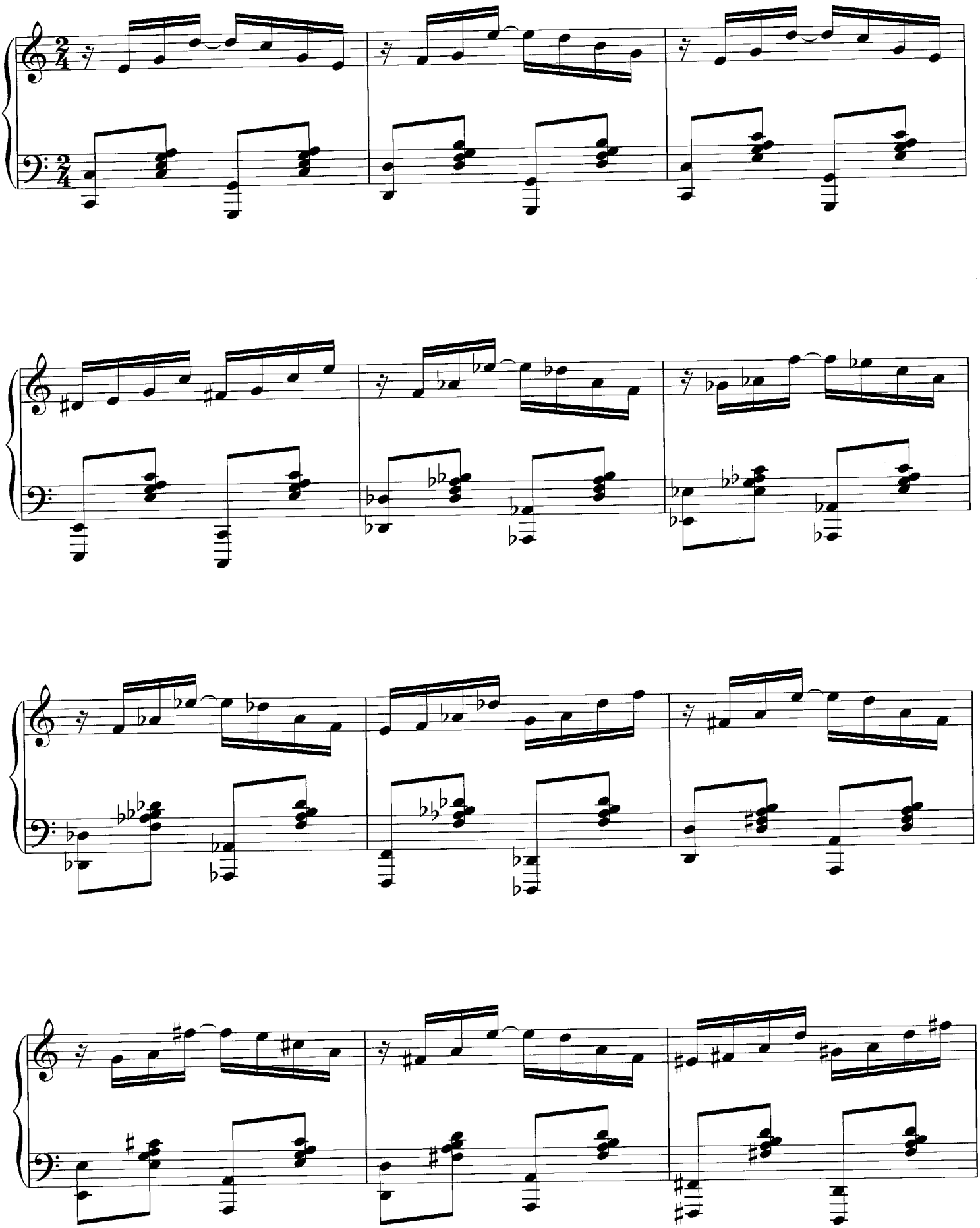

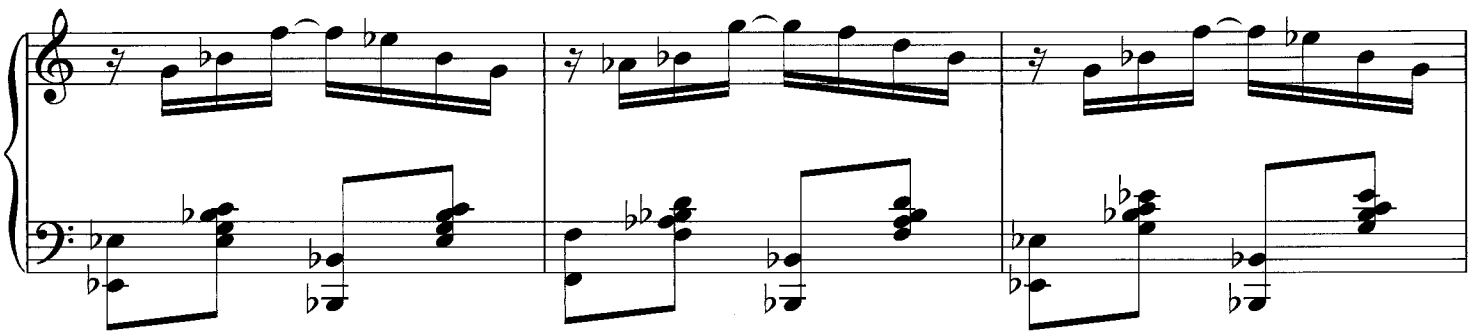

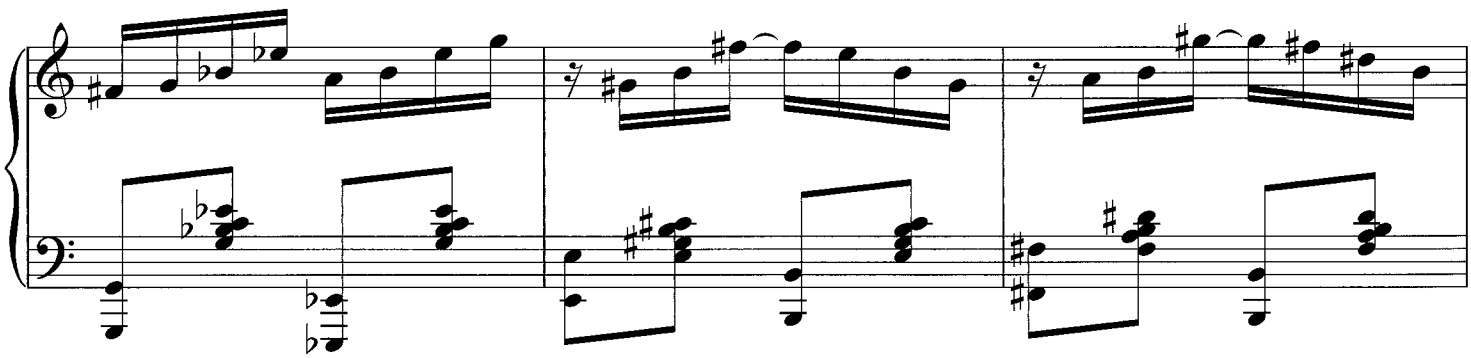

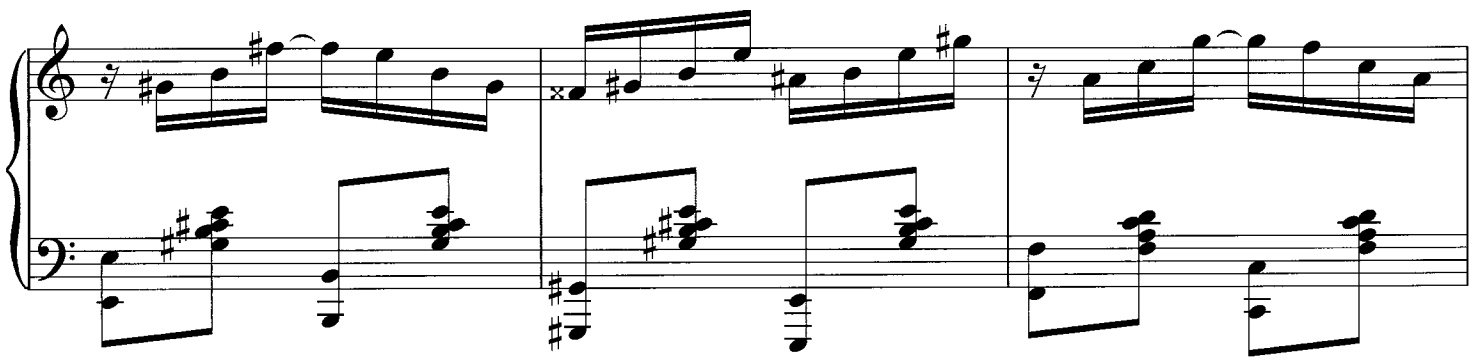

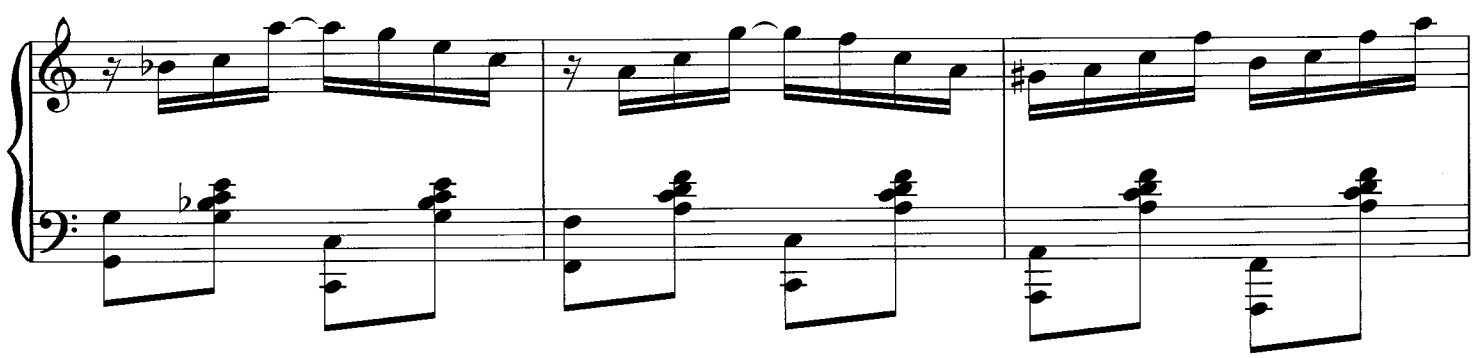

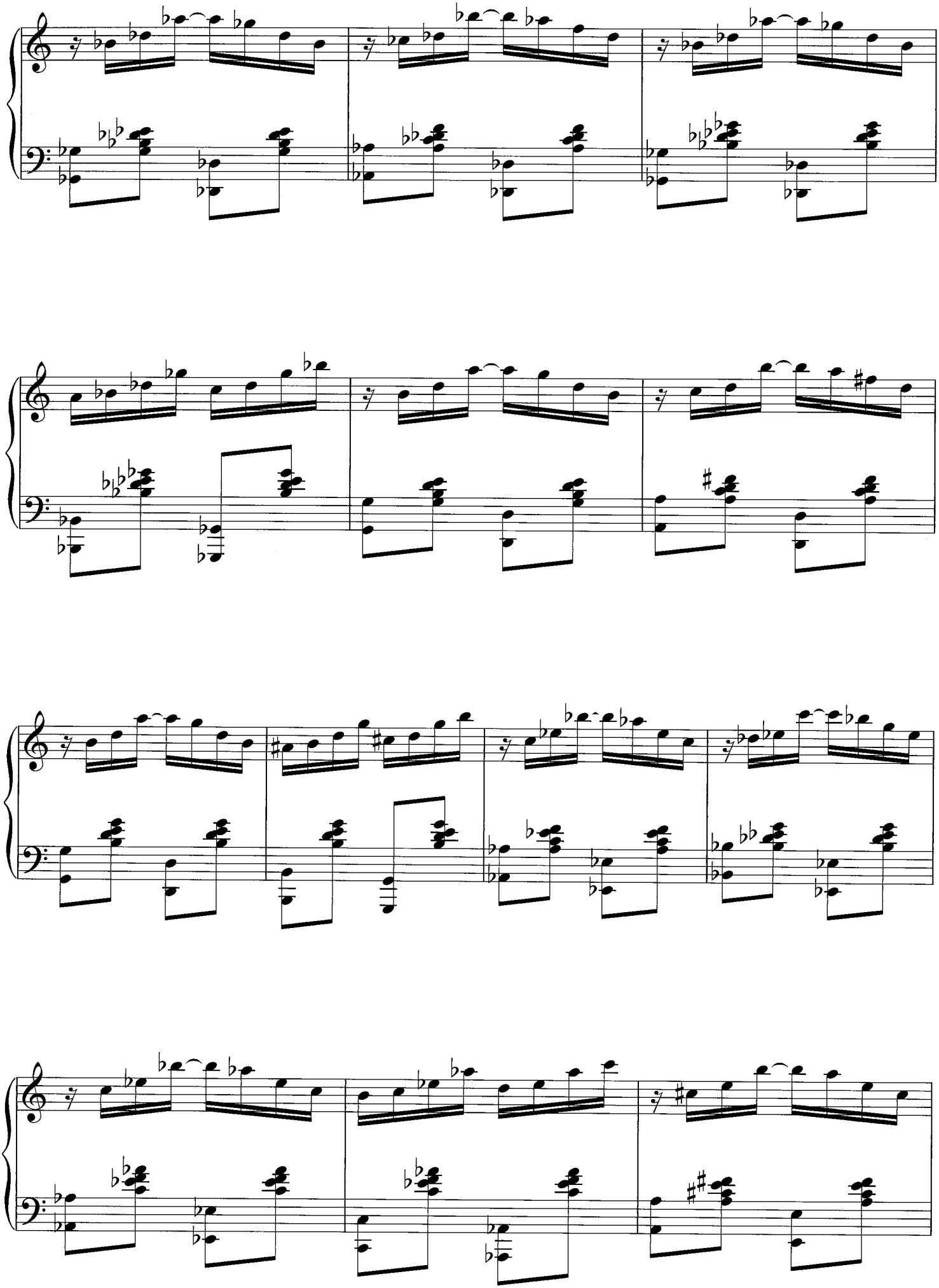

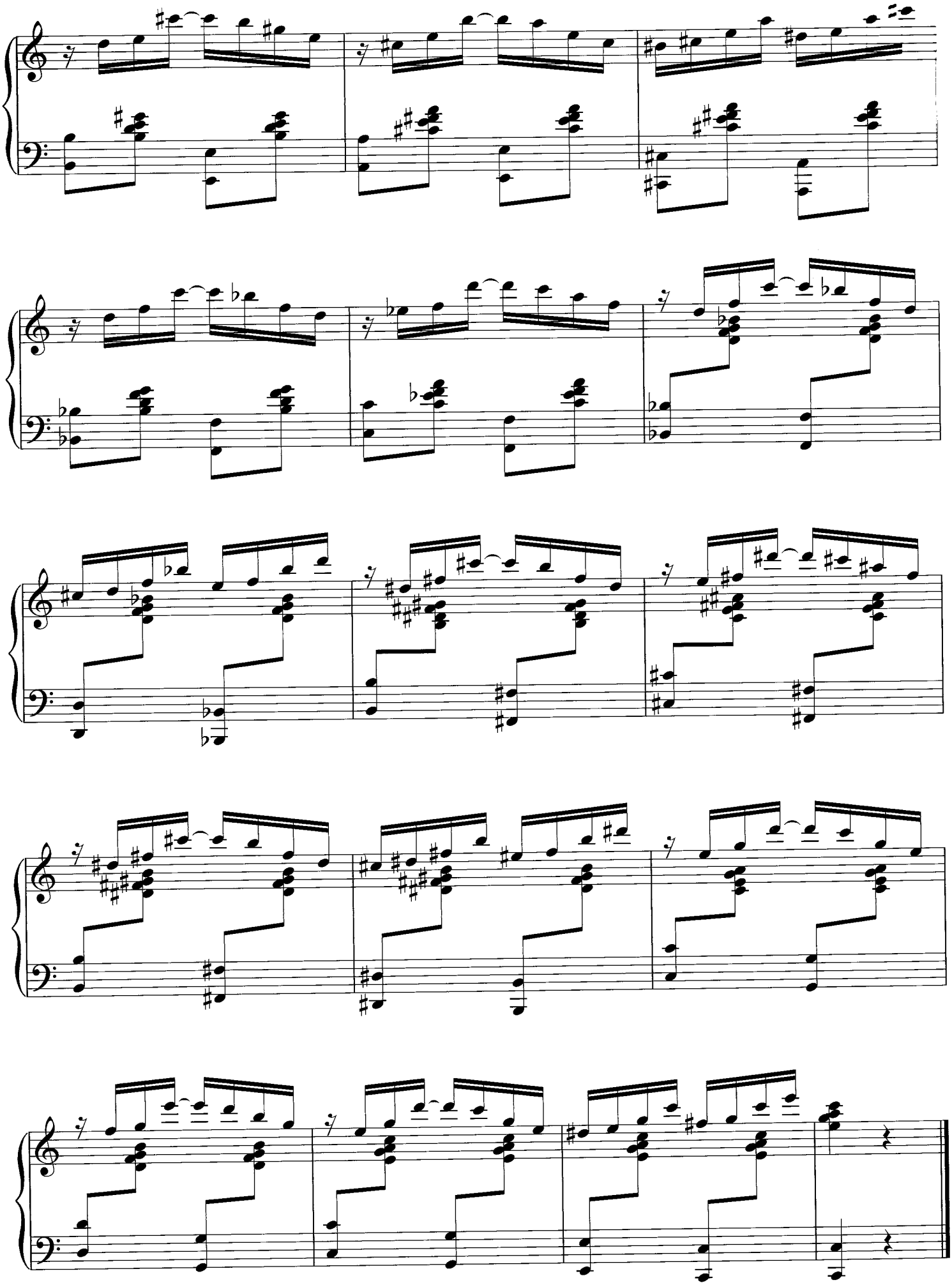

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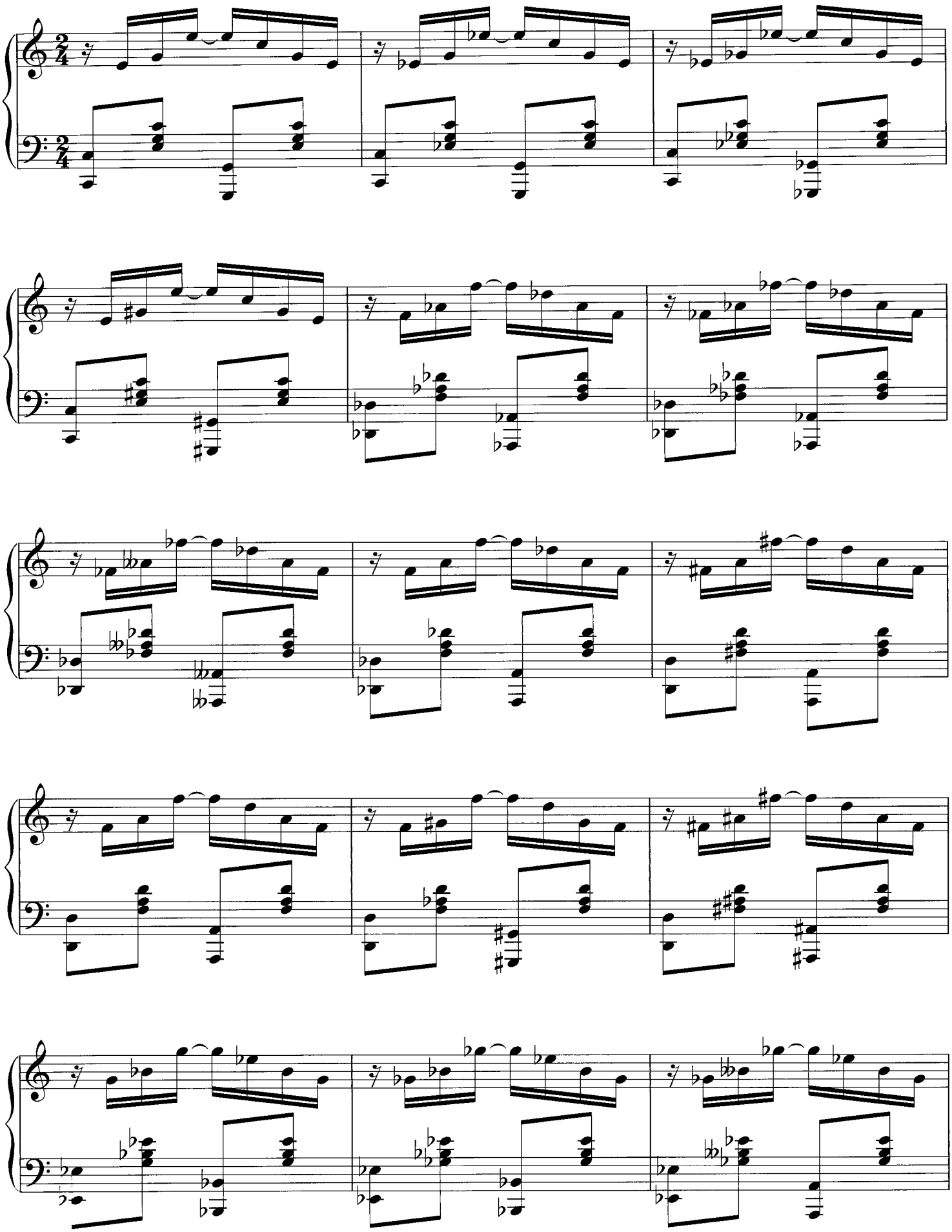

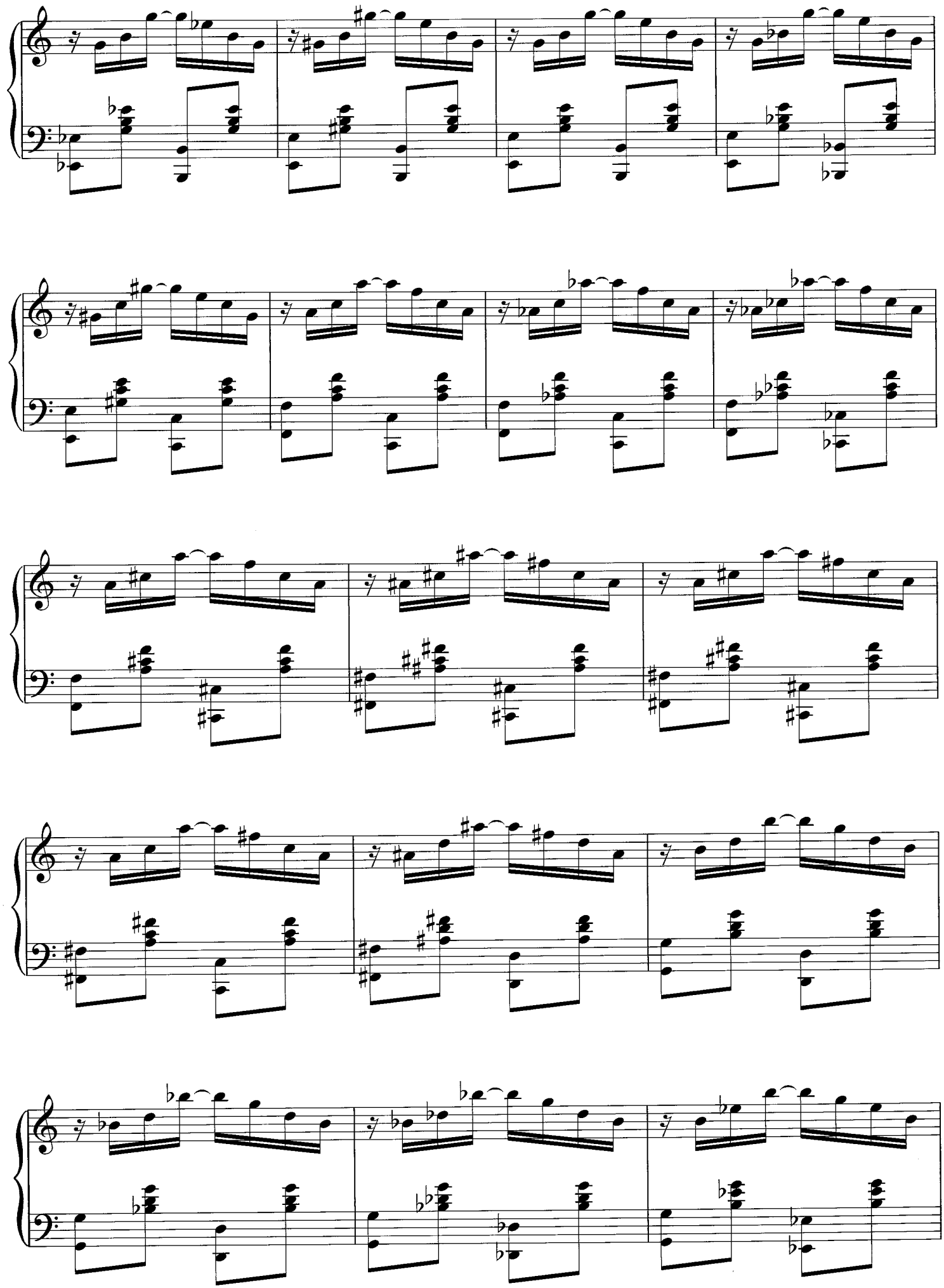

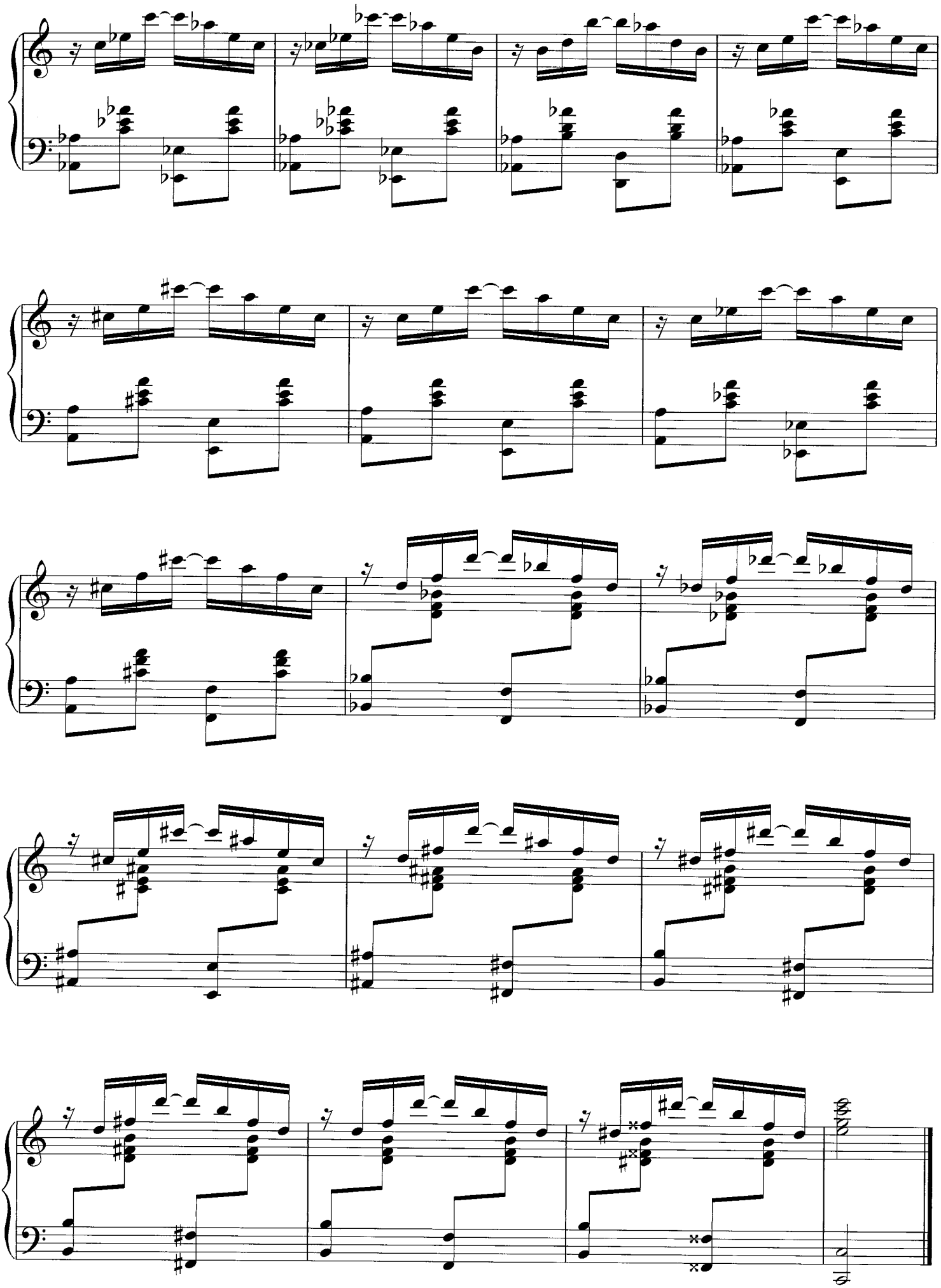

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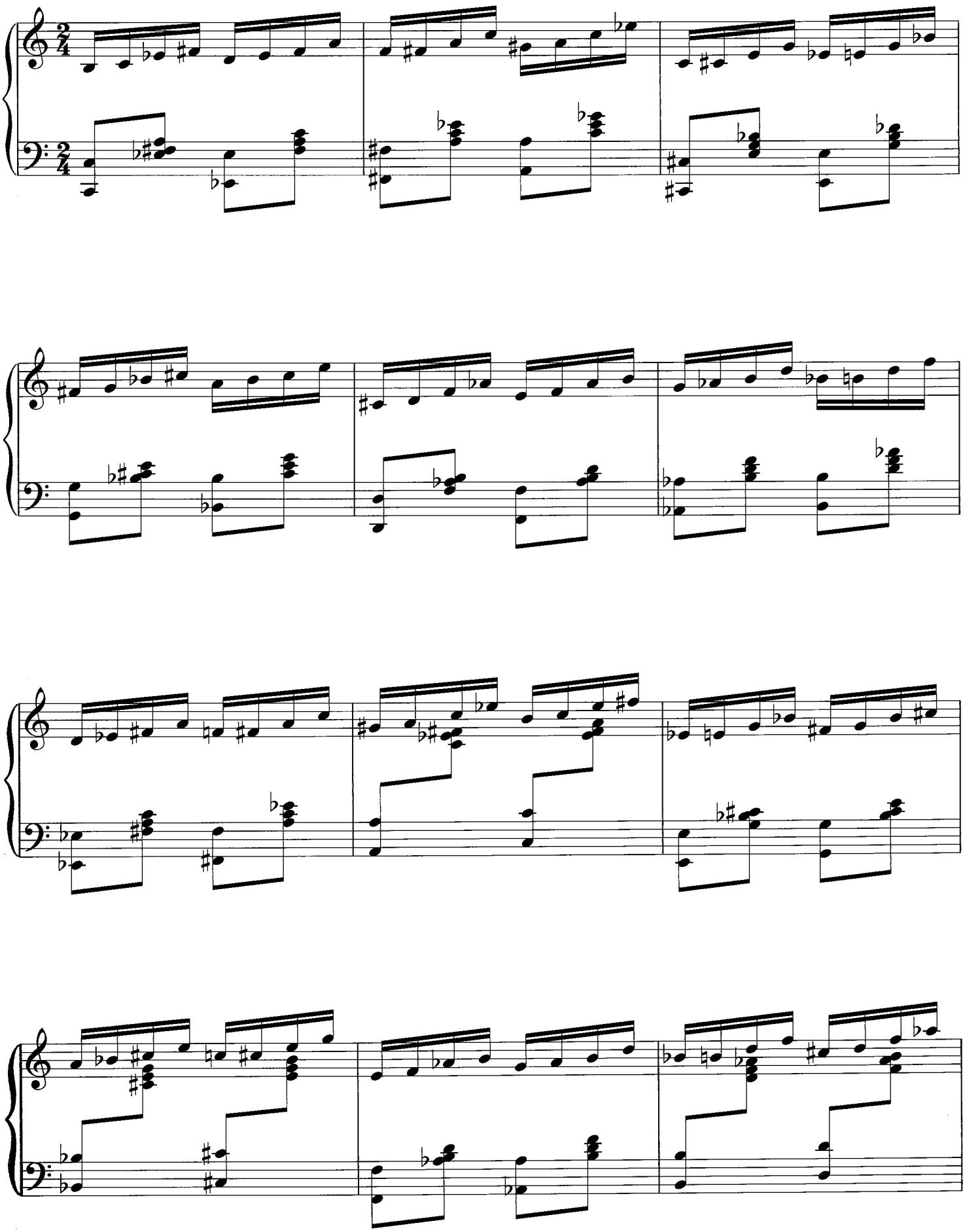

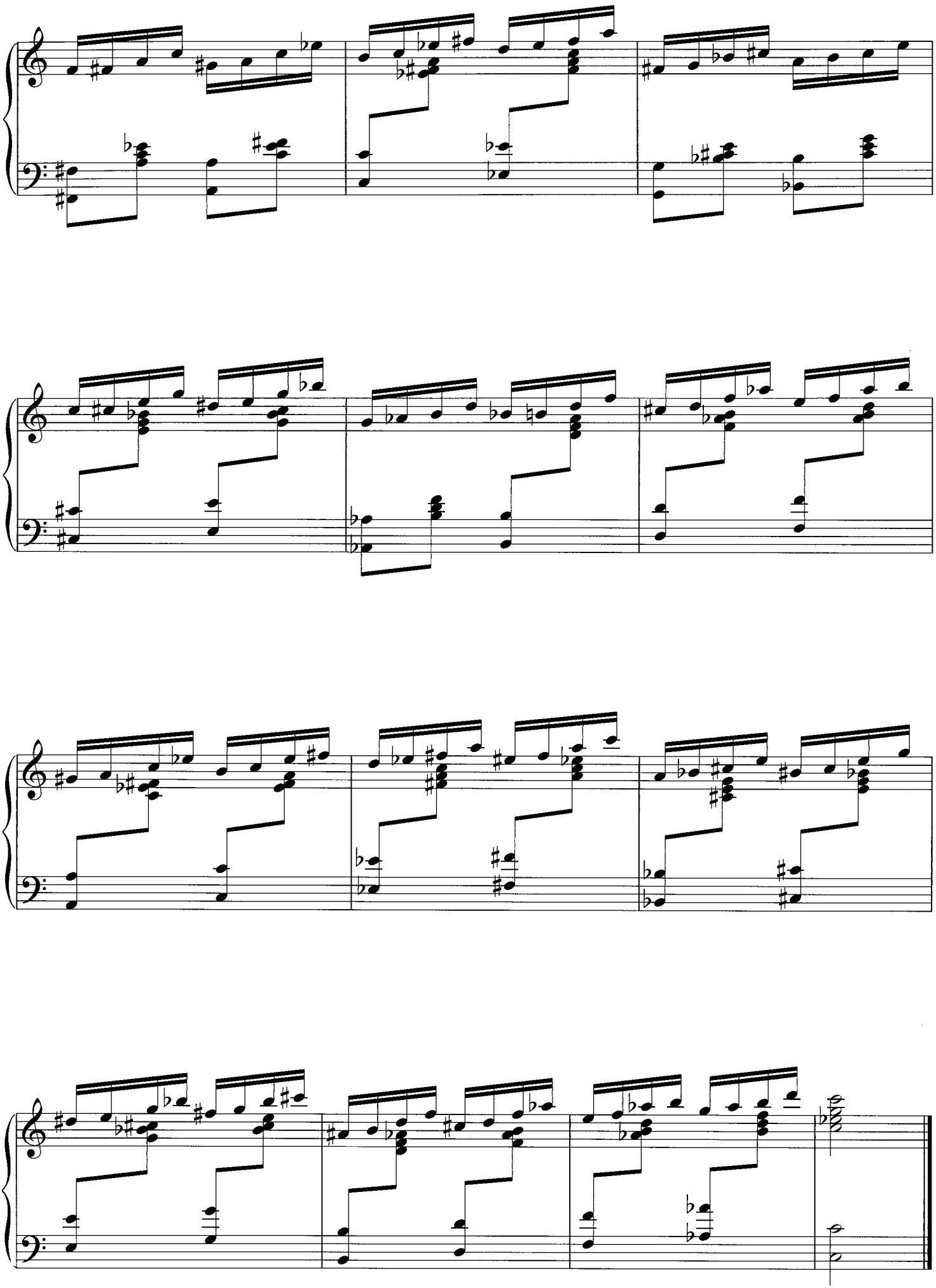

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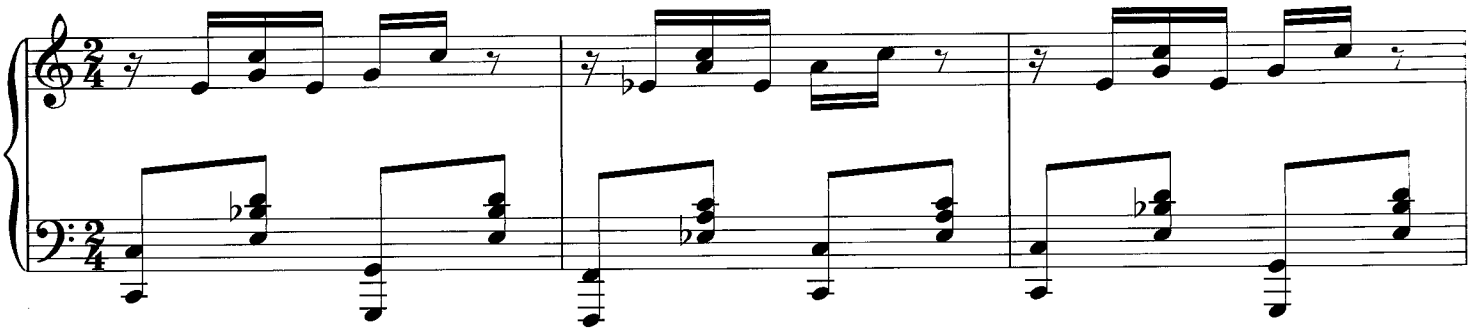

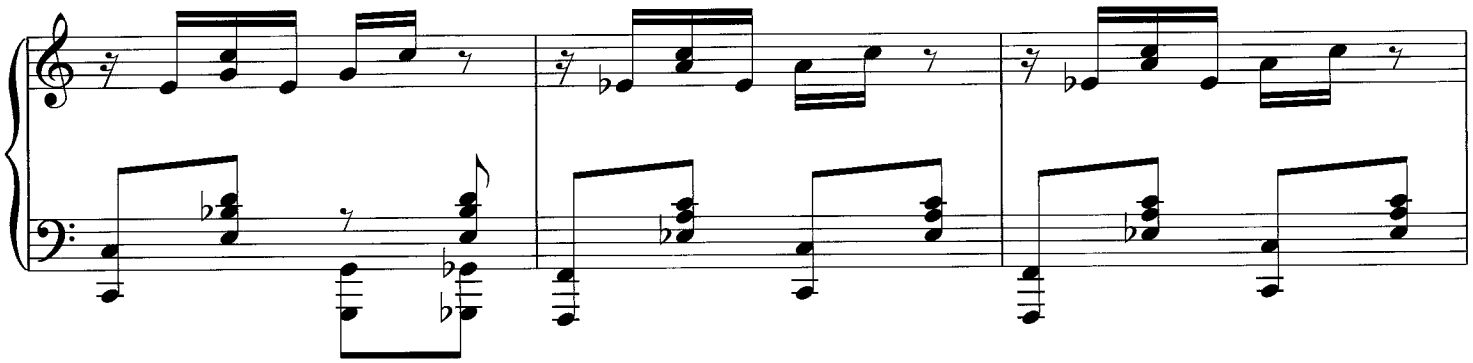

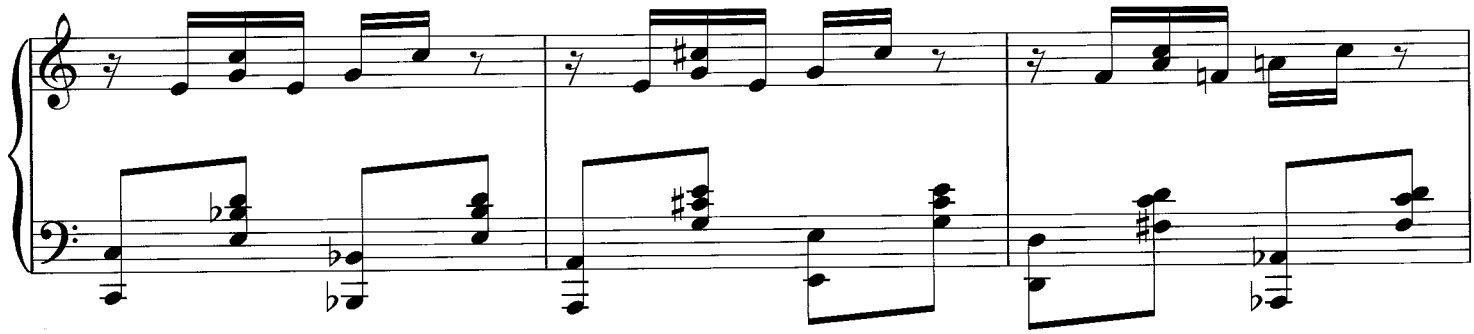

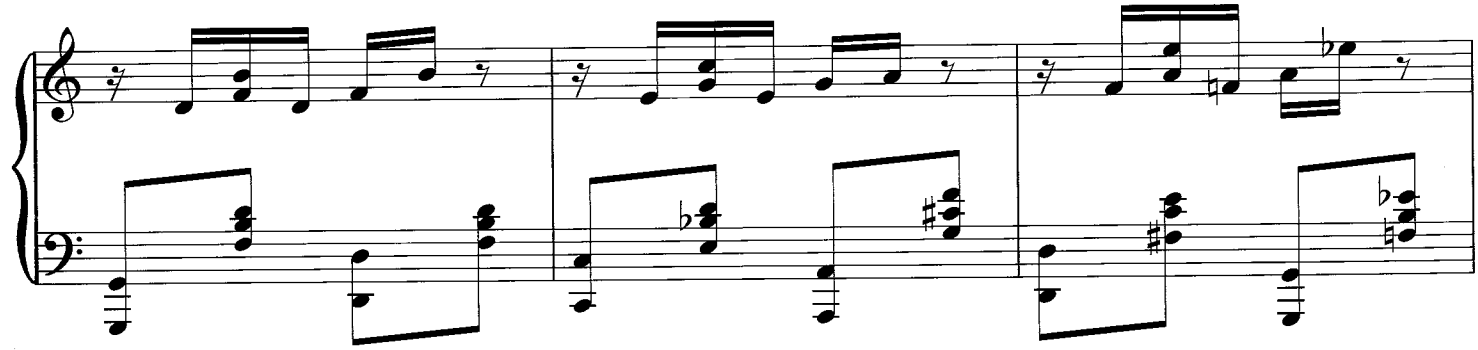

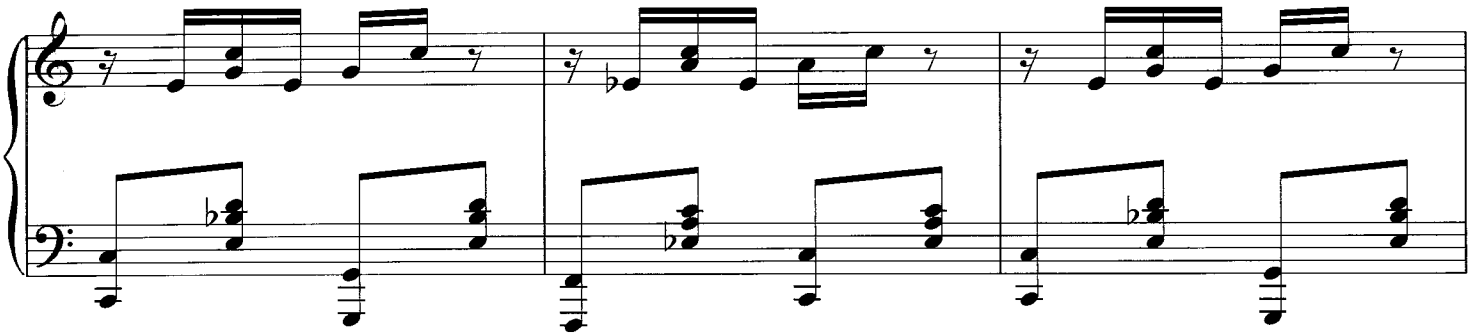

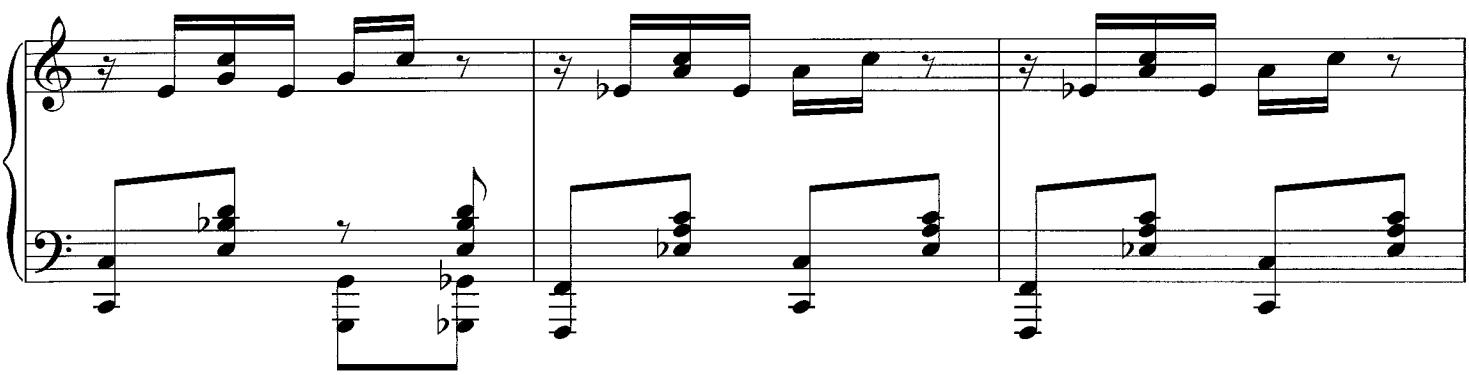

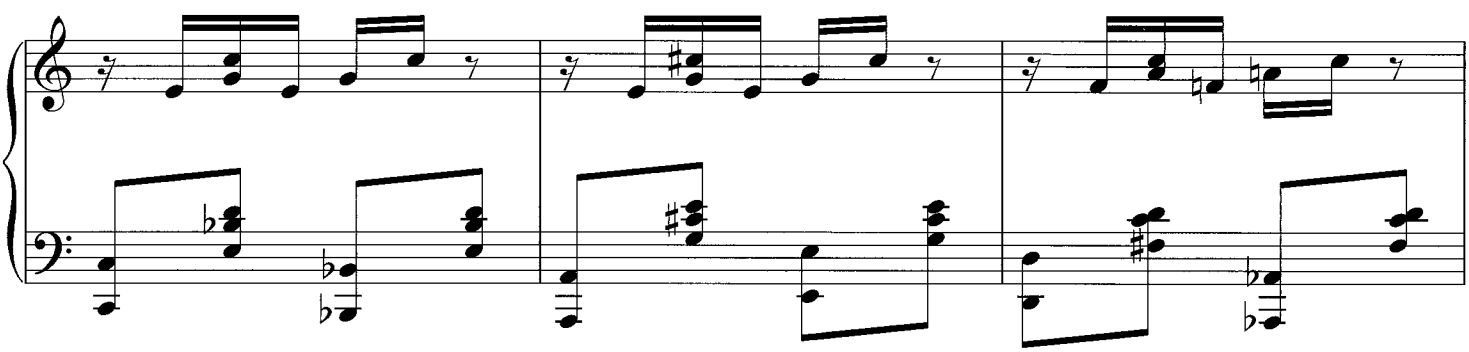

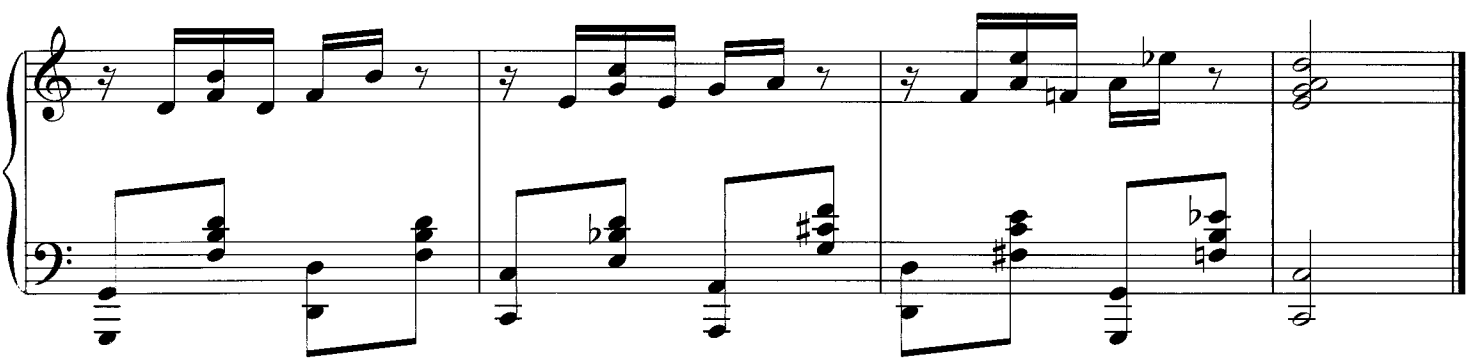

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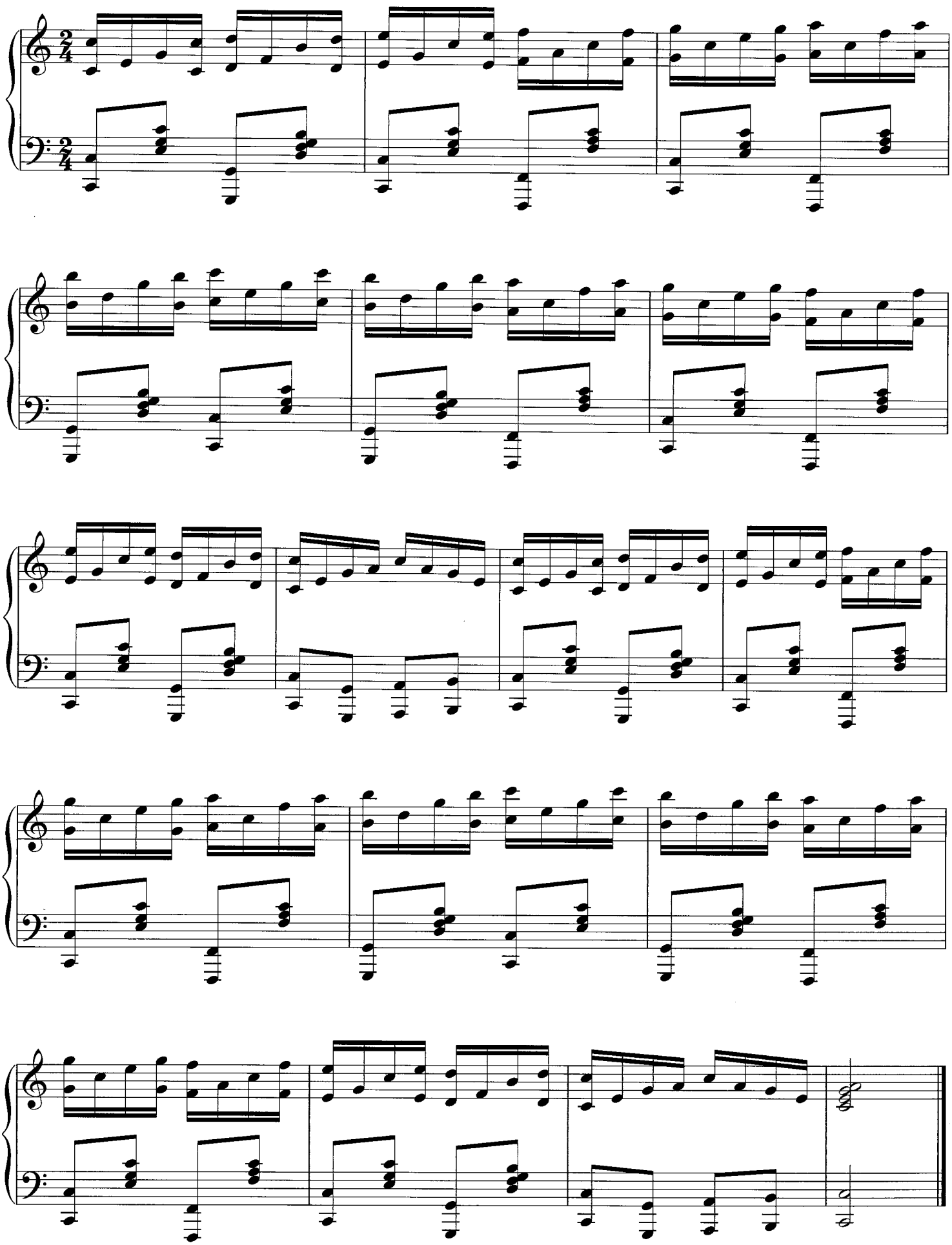

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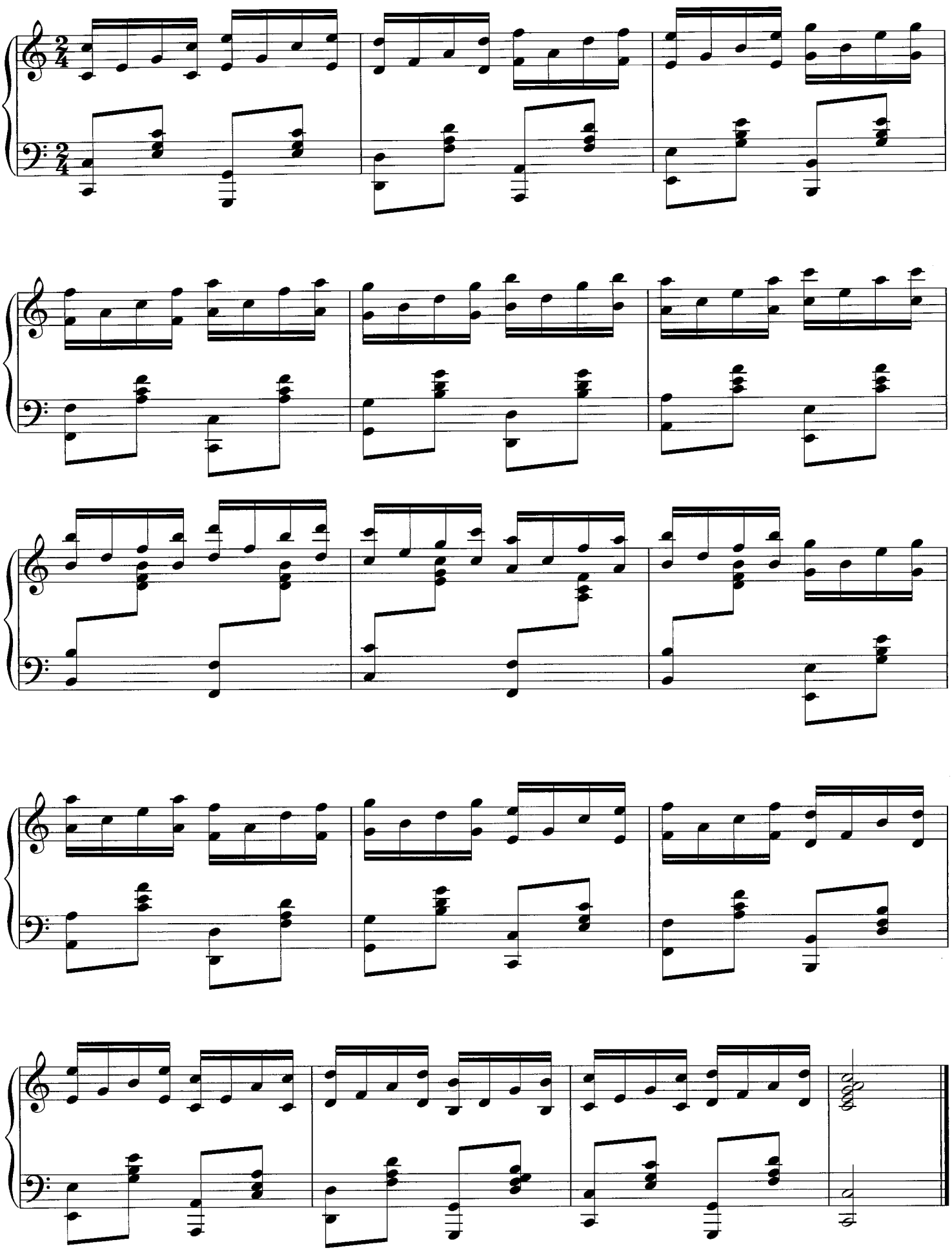

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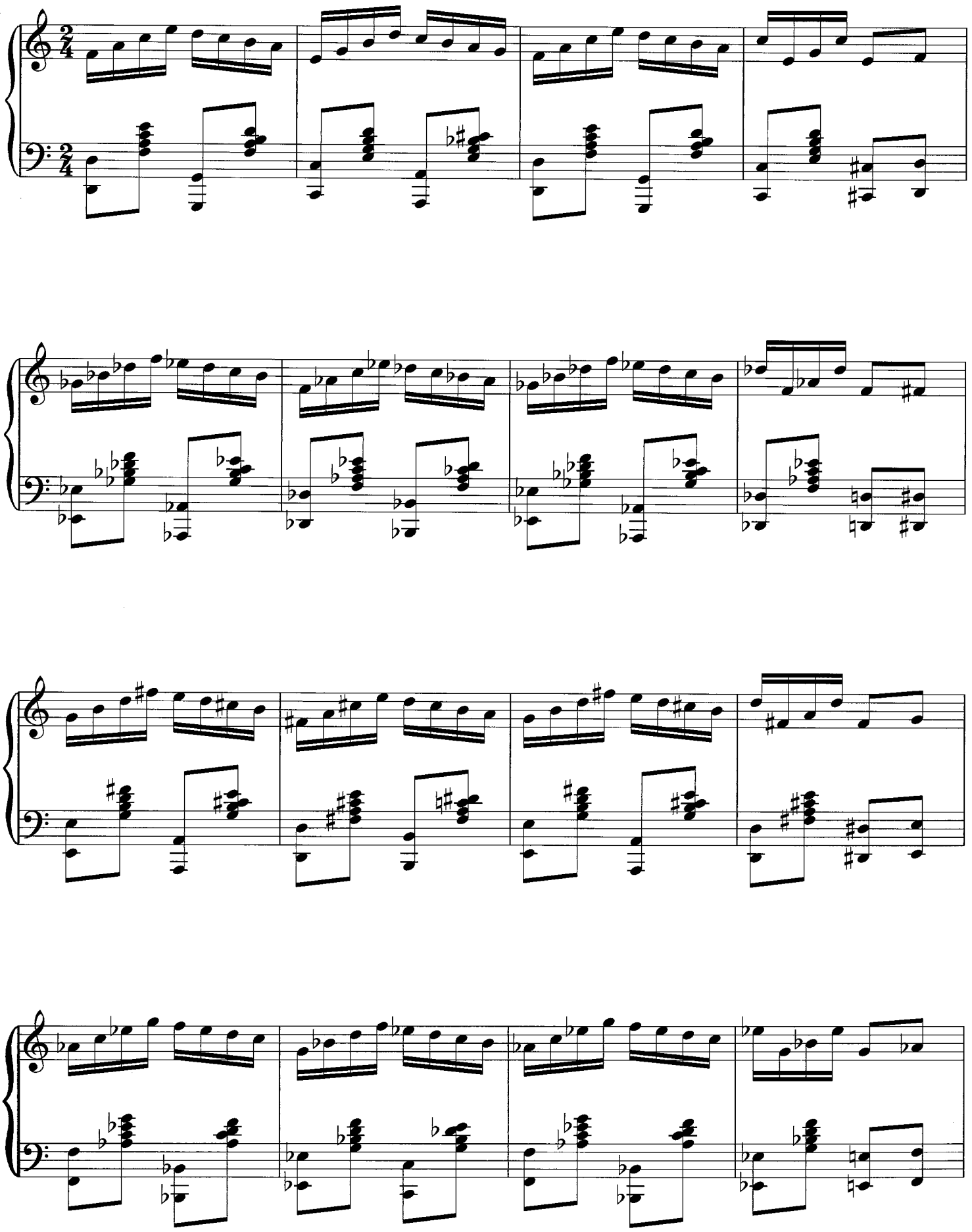

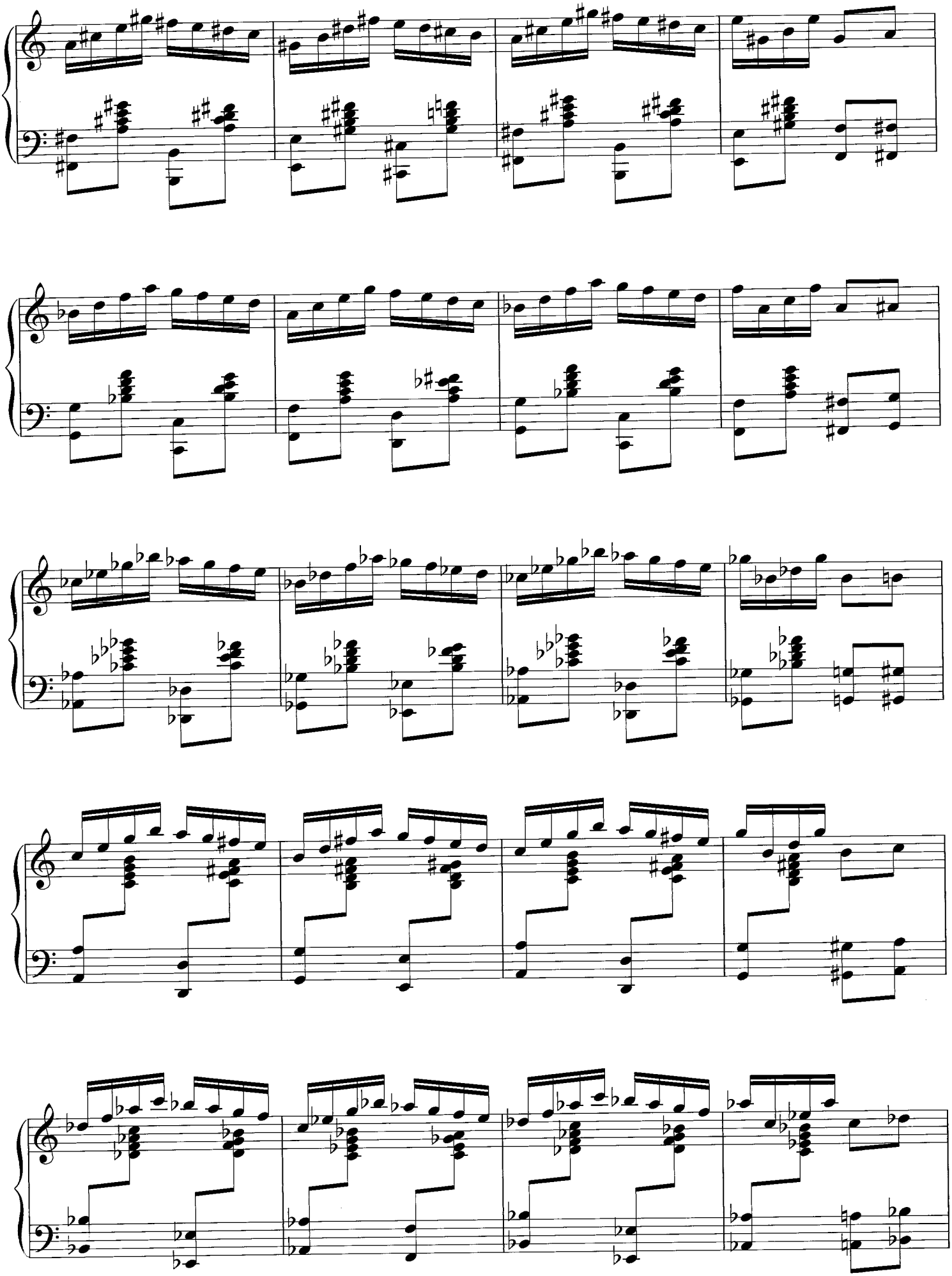

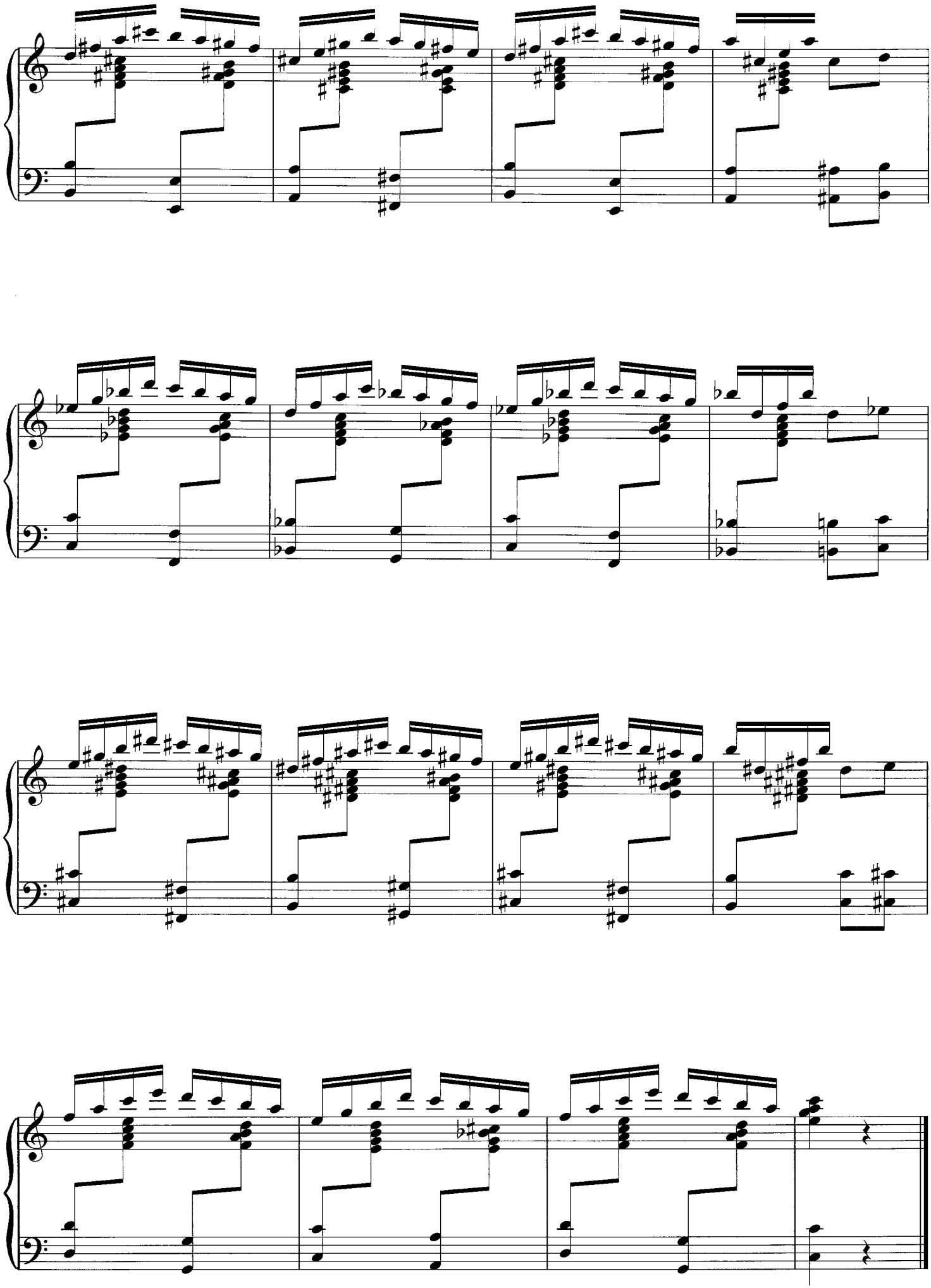

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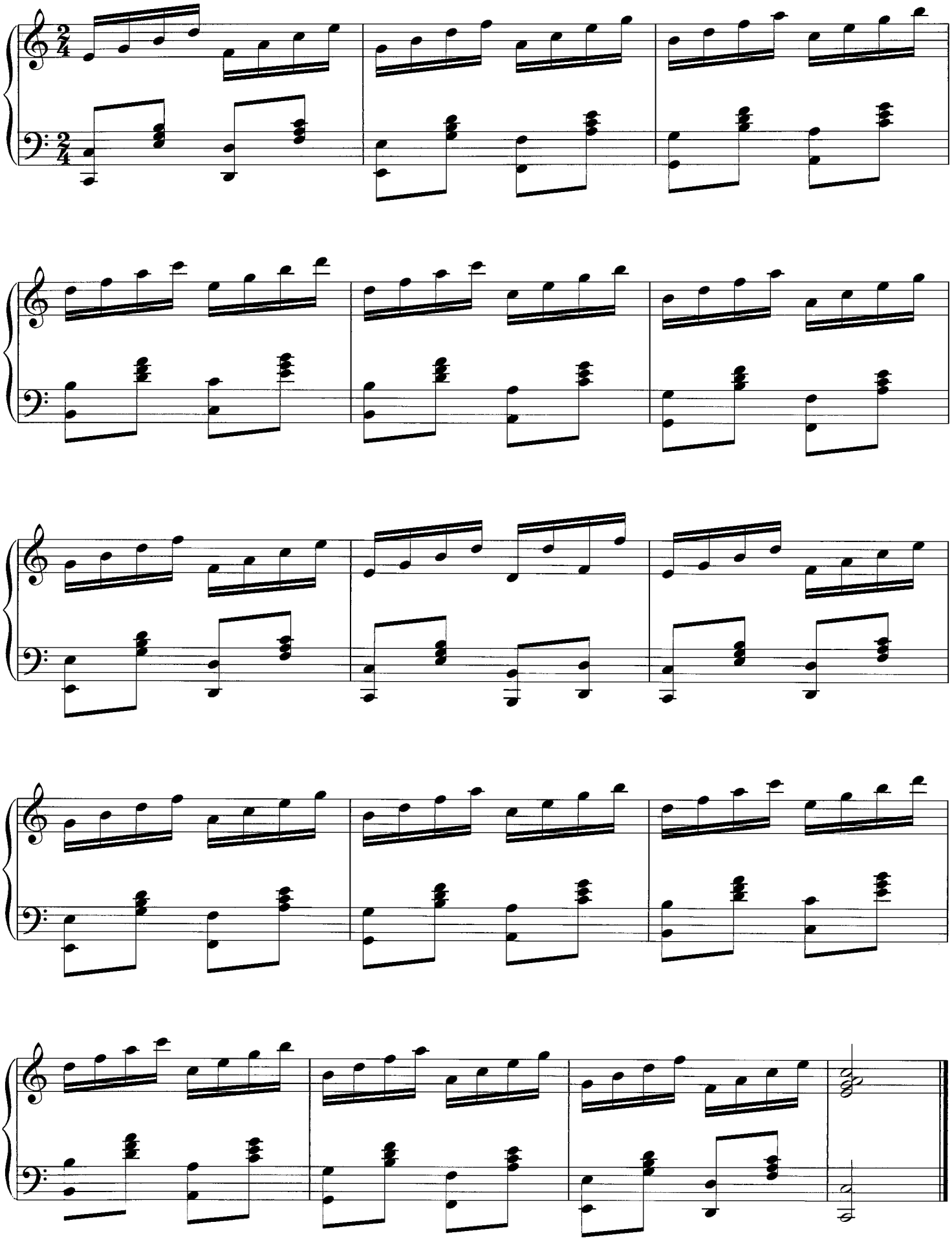

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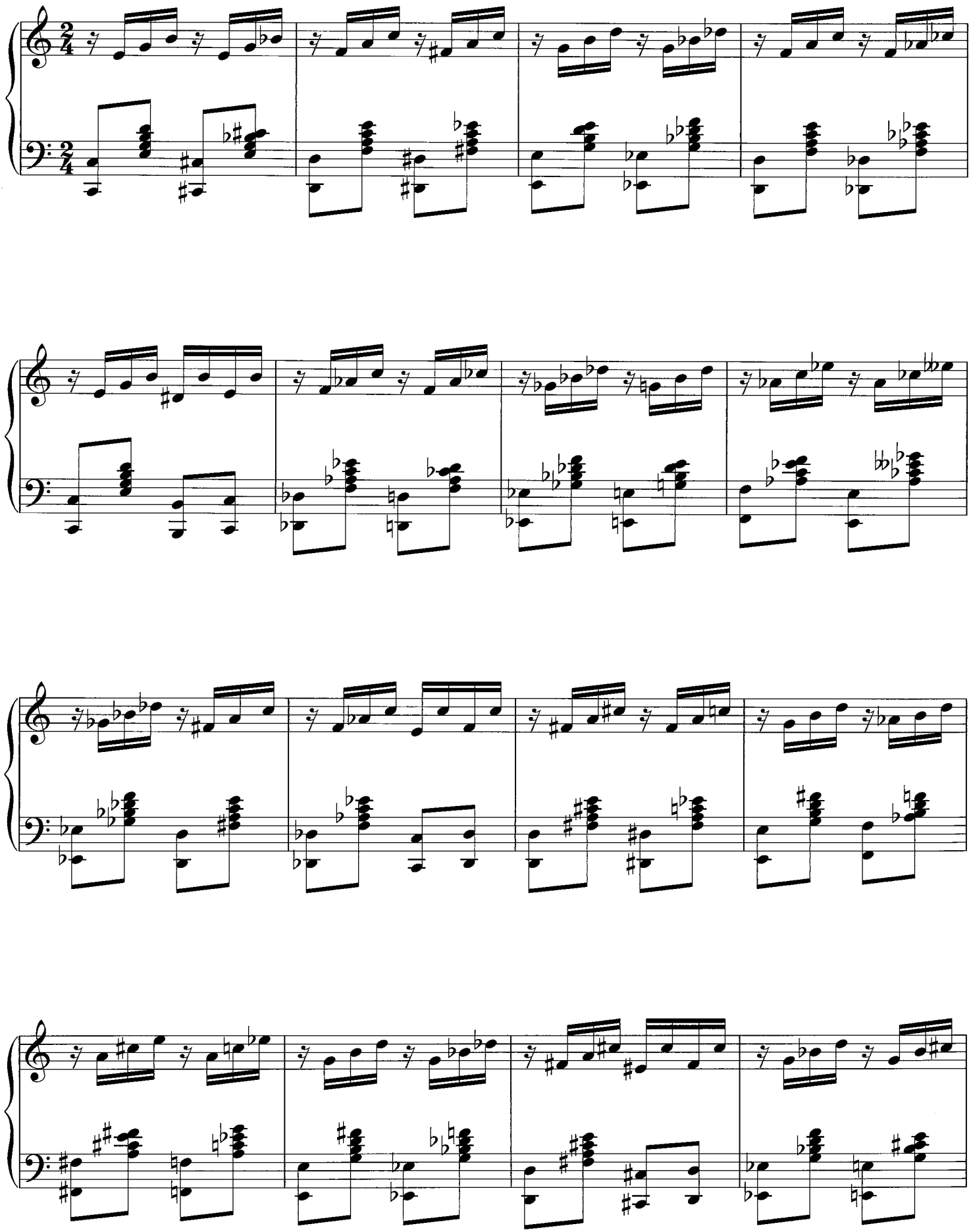

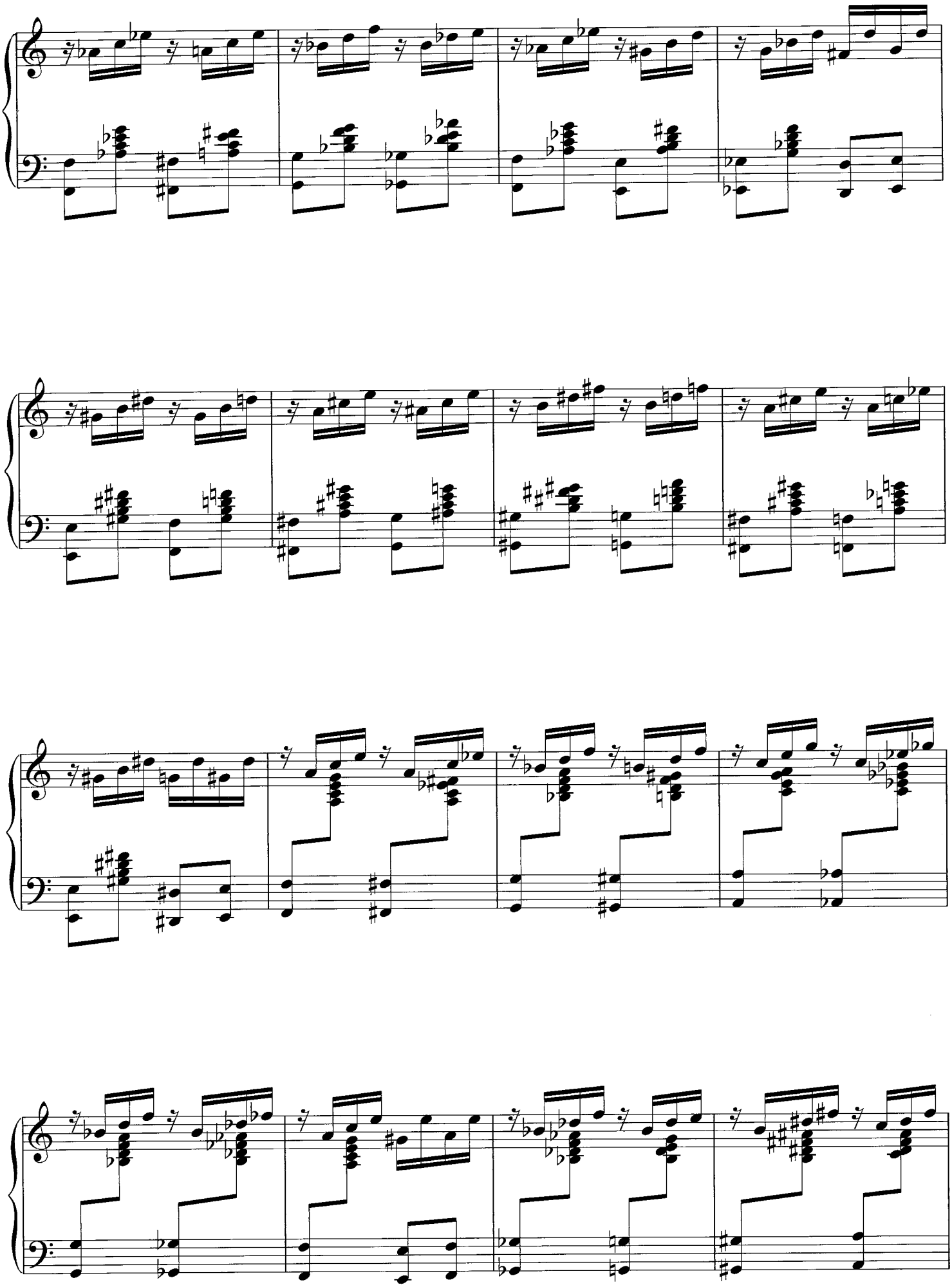

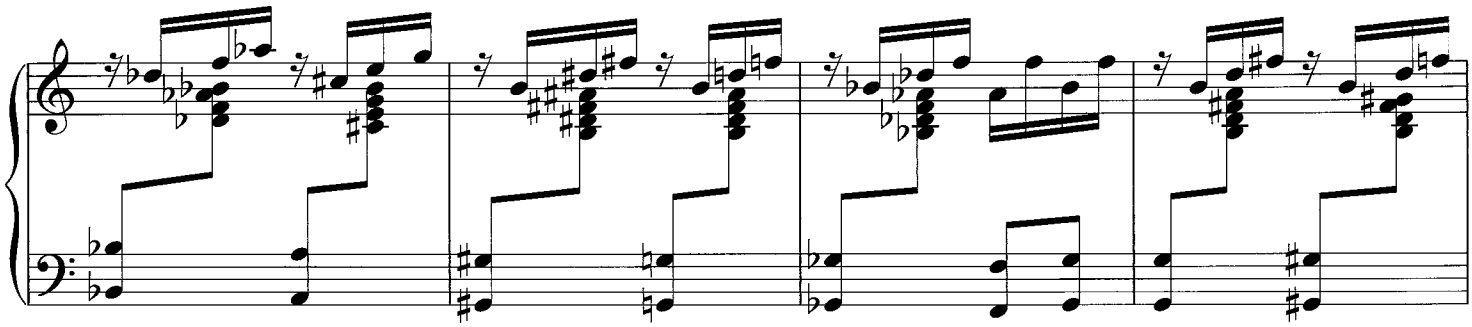

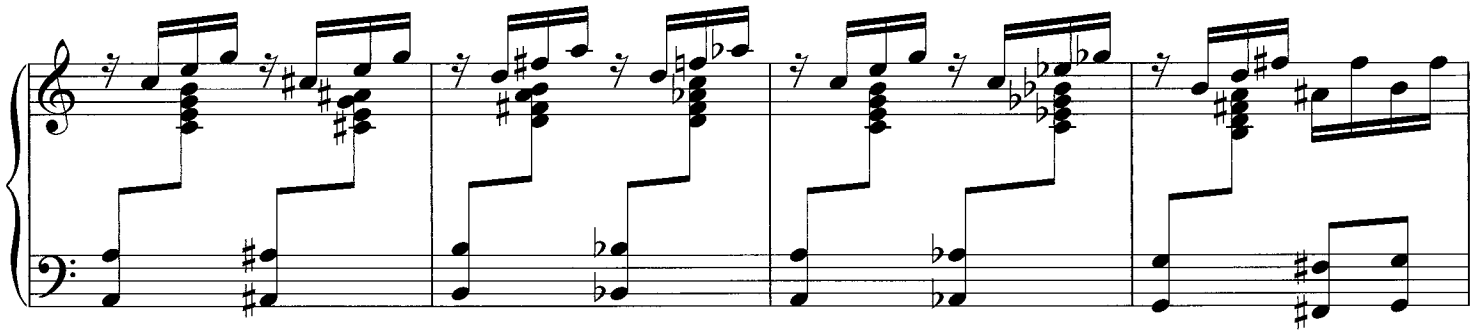

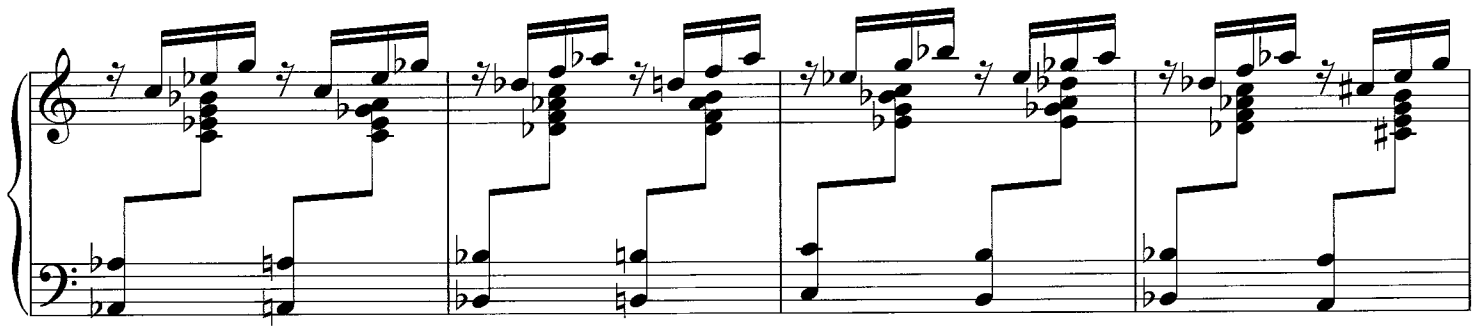

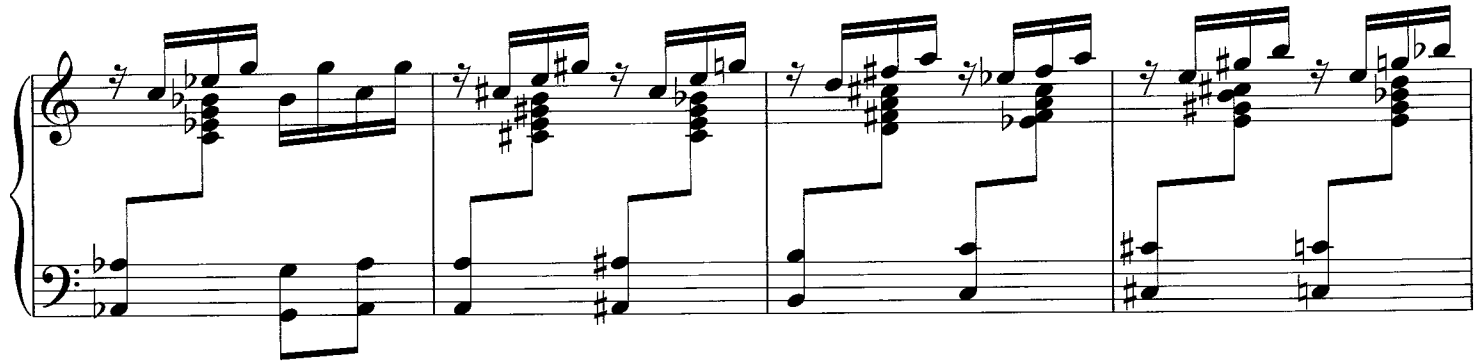

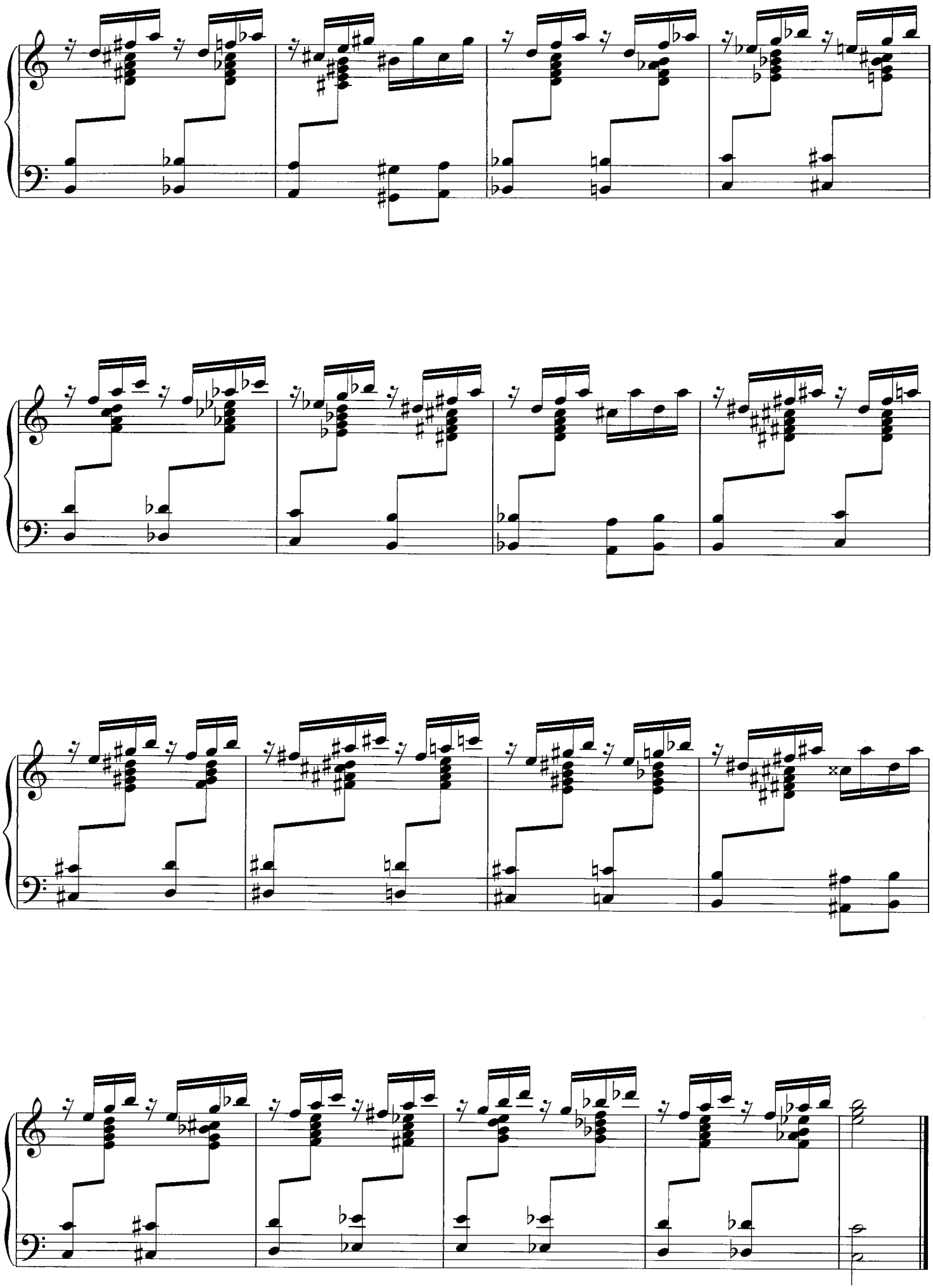

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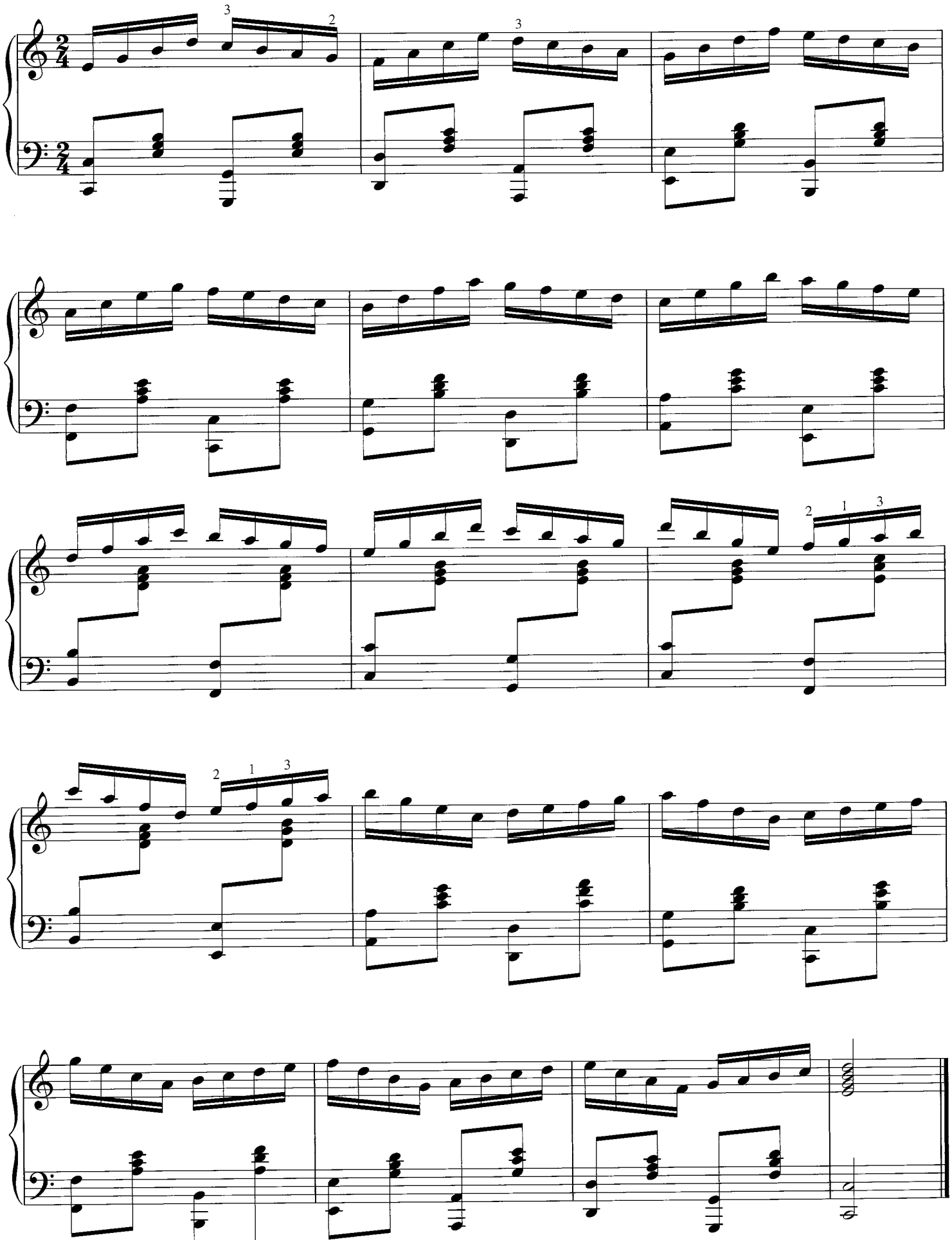

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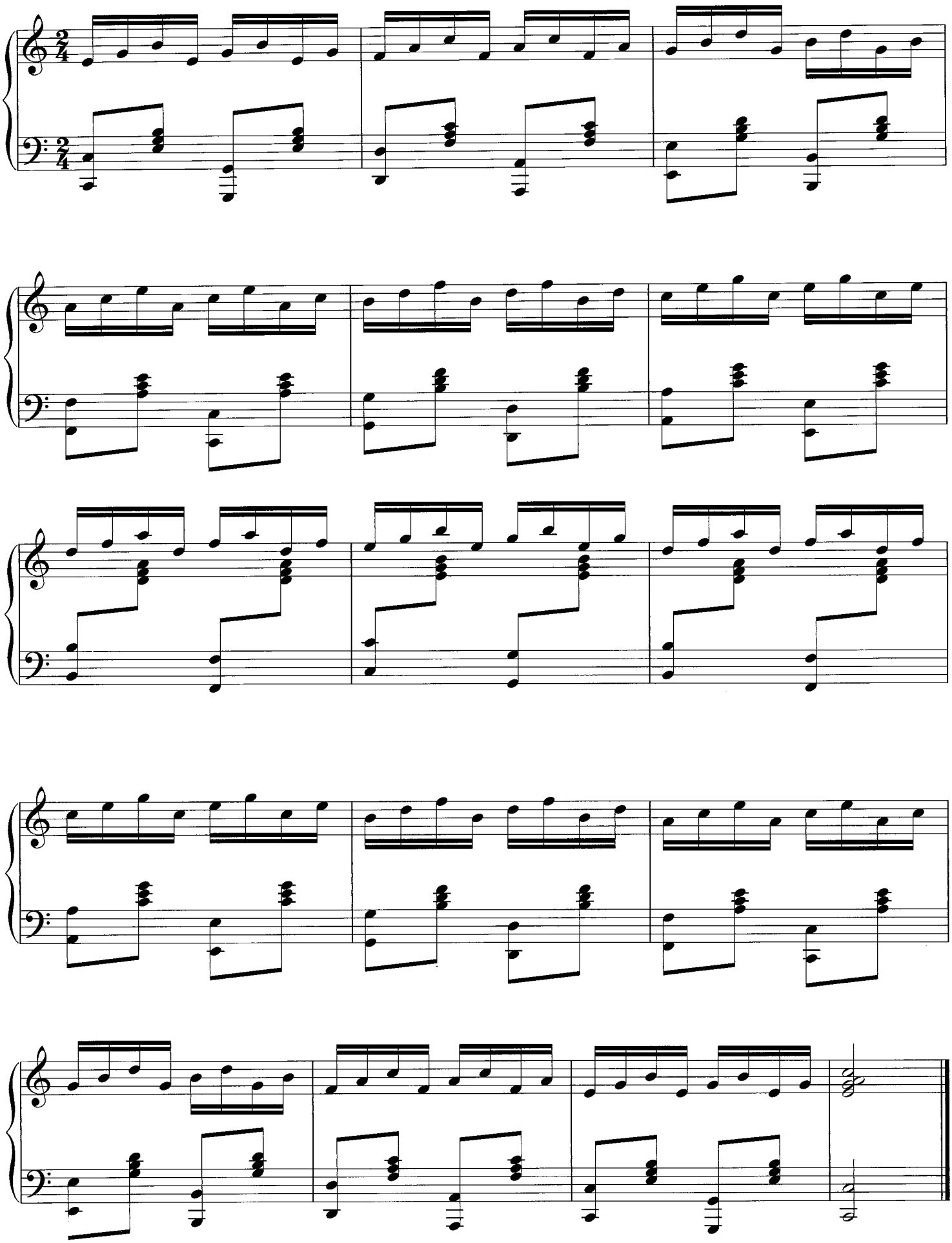
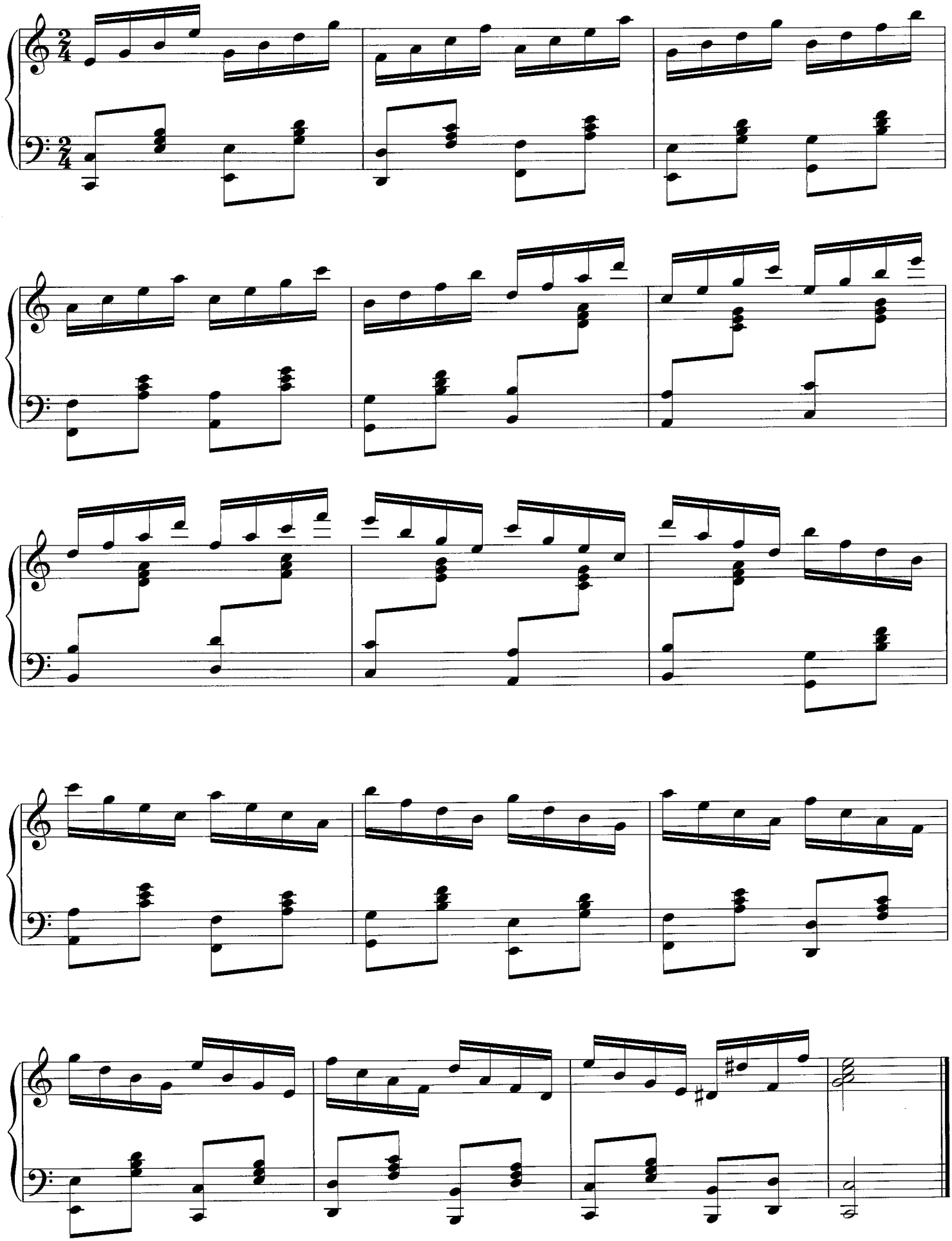
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